AGNES DE-COURCI:

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

In *TWO VOLUMES.*

Inſcribed with Permiſſion to Col. HUNTER.

By Mrs. BENNETT,

AUTHOR OF THE

WELCH HEIRESS, and JUVENILE INDISCRETIONS.

I know thou wilt grumble, courteous Reader, for every Reader in the World is a Grumbletonian more or leſs; and for my Part, I can grumble as well as the beſt of ye, when it is my Turn to be a Reader. SCARRON.

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APR

To Col. HUNTER.

SIR,

AT the ſame time that I ſolicit your protection of Agnes de Courci, I acknowledge myſelf to be impelled thereto, by the two grand motives, which the world have long been pleaſed to aſcribe to Dedicators in general, notwithſtanding a *vaſt* deal of fine writing to prove the contrary; namely, *vanity* and *ſelf-intereſt*: but to theſe I beg leave to add a third, more predominant, even in a female breaſt, than either; which is *Gratitude*.

My vanity, Sir, as an author, could not receive a higher gratification, than the compliment you paid the Welch Heireſs. To be told, that a man of underſtanding, who is alſo a very good judge of mankind, had patiently gone through the four volumes of Anna, and had not regretted the time ſo beſtowed, was more than enough to overturn my ſmall ſtock of humility: but you, Sir, do nothing by halves—benevolence, politeneſs, and good-humour, are the leading traits in your character; you

reſolved to render me the vaineſt of novel writers; Anna, you ſaid, had beguiled you of your tears; ſhe muſt, therefore, in ſome degree or other, have exhibited ſentiments, or feelings, congenial to your own; and in that confidence I am indeed vain. May Agnes be equally fortunate, may ſhe be honored by the ſame involuntary mark of apptobation, and my vanity will be proudly gratified.

Self-intereſt could not have ſelected a Patron for my Heroine, whoſe influence is more generally regarded, whoſe example is more reſpectfully followed. Your name, Sir, is a recommendation I am anxious not to diſcredit; no perſon, who has the pleaſure to know Col. Hunter, will believe there is in exiſtence a being ſo hardy, as to prefix it to a work which has not, at leaſt, the merit of a right intention, to offer in atonement for defects, in apology for temerity.

I have endeavoured, Sir, to render the females of my novel worthy your acquaintance; and the males, ſuch as a Gentleman, and a Soldier, will not bluſh to aſſort with. The ſtory is a combination of real, and fictitious events; and the moral, notwithſtanding the cataſtrophe, I hope I may ſay, has nothing in it offenſive to the niceſt delicacy. Such as ſhe is, if Agnes ſhould

—not

—not unpleaſingly amuſe one of thoſe tedious hours, which in ill health confine you to your apartment, ſhe will find her way from thence into ſome of the reſpectable circles where Colonel Hunter is always a welcome viſitant.—And thus, Sir, I have proved my vanity, and pleaded guilty to the charge of ſelf-intereſt.

But how ſhall I deſcribe the grateful ſenſations I feel, in addreſſing you on a ſubject dearer to my heart, than the vital ſtream which animates it?

Where ſhall a mother, whoſe exiſtence is in her children, who fancies ſhe ſees in them every perfection, whoſe anxious ſolicitude for their welfare is the buſineſs of her life? where ſhall ſhe find a language? how put into words her thankful gratitude to the invaluable friend, whoſe open heart, and ſupporting hand, was extended to her beloved child! whoſe goodneſs and penetration removed the veil which humility had caſt over a timid young female, who encouraged and upheld her; who, by a noble perſeverance and ſteady kindneſs, called forth thoſe ſparks of genius, which but for him, would have ſhrunk like the delicate ſenſitive from the rude touch of envy and oppreſſion; and who, when emulative pride had rendered her more worthy, procured for her the firſt of all protections, that of —women of *virtue!* and men of *honor!*

When

When I have ſaid, Sir, *you* are that *friend*, and I am that *mother*, does it not compriſe more of *goodneſs* on your part, and *gratitude* on mine, than language can expreſs?

May the benevolent kindneſs you have ſo happily in your power, and ſtill more happily in your will, to communicate to others, be a perpetual ſource of peace, and tranquillity to yourſelf; and may every being, for whom you are intereſted, flouriſh like HARRIET ESTEN, under the genial warmth of your protecting friendſhip; and like her alſo, ever remember to *whom* they are ultimately indebted for the ſucceſs, which the ſanction and good wiſhes of ſo worthy a man muſt enſure.

And may you, Sir, never meet leſs gratitude for your kindneſs, or leſs reſpect for your character, than that which glows in the heart of her, who has the honor to ſubſcribe herſelf,

Sir,

Your gratefully devoted

Humble Servant,

The AUTHOR.

AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

LETTER I.

General Moncraſs to Major Melroſe.

Belle Vue.

IN the preſent ſituation of my affairs, it is equally impoſſible for me to combat your arguments, or do away the doubts of my prudence; which, notwithſtanding your agreeable raillery, I perceive you entertain; time, my dear Major, and time *only*, will unravel what you term the myſtery of my conduct; in the mean while I acknowledge the juſtneſs of your poſition; you draw the parallel between the incertitude of common events, and the natural imbecility of the human mind, with great truth; your concluſions are perhaps ſevere, but they are not leſs juſt, for that ſeverity.

In the morning of our days, however great the misfortunes of our family, however indigent our

circumſtances, and however friendleſs our ſituation; ſtill there is an hilarity, a gay confidence which gilds the opening hemiſphere of our days, and lifts the aſpiring mind out of the reach of thoſe very ills, under which, at a more advanced period of life it would infallibly ſink; and as the objects which engage our early purſuits, either totally elude our eager graſp, or being obtained become no longer deſirable, hope and fancy, the two grand ſupporters of the human ſyſtem, create ſucceſſively, phantom after phantom, to fill the vacuum left by diſappointment or ſatiety, with a ſomething or other as enſnaring, and perhaps, as viſionary as the former; and in this pleaſing delirium are we amuſed: thus, in the expectation of the joys of that to-morrow which never comes, do we triſle away our ſtrength of mind and body, till experience and the decay of our faculties inform us,

"Every day is a ſatire on the laſt," and well it is that this is ſo; the mind would elſe, in the evening of life, want fortitude to ſupport its own dignity; when ſated with ſome, and torn from others, of our early enjoyments; if we were not convinced of their futility, we ſhould either ſink into an apathy diſgraceful to humanity; or waſte our age, ſtill more unprofitably than our youth, in unavailing regrets over the urn of our departed joys.

No, Major, I have not forgot the many years I ſighed for Lady Mary,—the anguiſh I felt, when honour tore from my bleeding heart—the flattering hope her goodneſs inſpired—and yet I feel the reluctant, but ardent tranſport, with which I reſigned my fate to her faſcinating generoſity; ſtill leſs can I wean my ſoul from a recollection

collection of the five happy years of congenial bliſs, which paſſed, too, too rapidly ſince our marriage. Oh Major! have I not loved her through all the viciſſitudes of fortune? have I not ſeen her where ſhe was not? when ever joy entered my heart, was it not in her form? and when I was overwhelmed with ſorrow, her image was my ſolace, *yet we are parted*, well, "not to deſerve but to bear misfortunes is, the taſk which nature aſſigns to man; more, is out of the limits of his power."

But although, next to my own ſelf acquittal, I value the good opinion of my friend, let me not meanly ſeek juſtification at the expence of a woman, whoſe exceſs of affection for the moſt unhappy of men, is the real ſource of every unamiable trait in her character.

Lady Mary actually has, (or which is in effect exactly the ſame thing, thinks ſhe has) cauſe for her jealouſy. Her paſſions are ſtrong, her attachments, as has been proved, are founded on principle: Every ſentiment of her ſoul is ſanctioned by the ſtricteſt honor: her diſguſts are no leſs ſtrong than her partialities; and from the ſame ſource; it is a want of her favourite virtues, it is mental deficiencies to which ſhe never can be reconciled: her good or ill opinion is not the reſult of caprice, or ſudden impreſſion; ſhe is, perhaps, the ſtricteſt obſerver in the world—neither ſex, age, or ſituation, are of any import to her, in the ſelection of thoſe ſhe honours with her favour; it is the ſoul governed by reaſon, and guided by honour, with whom her's forms an alliance; and it is neceſſary to her peace, that her adopted favourites ſhould approve themſelves worthy the unreſerved confidence ſhe repoſes in

them : when a mind thus ſteady in its attachment, happens alſo, like Lady Mary's, to be fraught with ſenſibility, its ſufferings, at ſeeing its idol defaced by the appearance of infidelity and ingratitude, muſt be extreme ; ſhe charges me with *cruelty—cruelty* to *her*, to my *wife*, the firſt *love* of my youth. I perſiſt, ſhe ſays, in injuring *her*, and in diſhonouring myſelf—what a taſk is mine ?—I beſought her to give ſome credit to my principles, to confide in my honor : but when does reaſon and paſſion form an union in the mind of woman ? rage and anguiſh ſwelled her fine features.

Honor ! cried ſhe, what is the honor that obliges General Moncraſs to deſtroy the peace of his wife ?

Time, I told her, (and I told her true) would explain the motives which actuated my conduct.

Her features aſſumed an affected placidity, a ſmile of contempt took place of paſſion.

Till then, ſir, ſaid ſhe diſdainfully, preſenting her hand to her father, 'we will not meet.'

Had not Lord Ruthven been preſent, had he not treated me in a way that forbad all humiliation on my ſide, I ſhould, I believe, have ſought to prevail on Lady Mary to hear reaſon ; but I did not ; I ſuffered them to leave the room, and retired, not a little out of humour, to my own apartment, where I remained ſome hours, unable totally to ſubdue the reſentment, I could not help feeling, at ſome parts of Lord Ruthven's behaviour ; and diſtreſſed at the impoſſibility of convincing Lady Mary of the injury ſhe did me : her uneaſineſs wrung my ſoul, and after a thouſand different reſolutions, I went to her apartment, meaning to try to ſooth and pacify her ; perhaps it

was

was better for us both, that her jealouſy had precipitated her into a meaſure, which rendered me miſerable. I know not, Major, had ſhe condeſcended to be more grieved than angry, how I could have withſtood her tears; yet there *is* a *cauſe*, a *cauſe*, a *ſtory*, that muſt be awhile concealed: had I in a moment of weakneſs ſuffered it to eſcape me, how ſhould I have ſharpened the arrows of unmerited misfortune, already piercing with ruthleſs violence, the ſoft boſom of unoffending purity! and how have wounded my dear miſtaken Mary, in a part where ſhe is moſt vulnerable?

She was not in her dreſſing room, and not chuſing to ſubject myſelf to a ſecond inſult, from a man, whoſe age, as well as conſanguinity, prevented my adopting a gentleman's means of reſentment: I returned to my own apartment, without ſeeing, or being ſeen by any part of the family; during the time I ſpent there, my Swiſs made ſeveral humble efforts to gain admittance, but the angry voice in which I bid him not diſturb me, at length prevented his return.

At nine I rang; judge my ſurpriſe, he informed me the Earl and Lady Mary had ordered the travelling coach, and left the houſe ſoon after I retired to my library. Julia was abſolutely forced from Reuben, who was ſternly commanded not to preſume to write, or approach their reſidence; I found him in the drawing room where they left him, ſtretched on the carpet without motion, and almoſt without ſenſe; her woman, a diſcreet perſon, who has lived with her from her infancy, was left in care of her Lady's wardrobe; and the Maitre d'Hotel preſented me a letter from Lord Ruthven, ſignifying, very laconically, that his

health would oblige him to return to Bath; that it would not be agreeable to him to occupy any part of the ſame houſe with *me*, or my family; that as the houſe in the Creſcent was a ready furniſhed one, and as there were many others would ſuit him quite as well, he requeſted to know, whether I ſhould continue in it, in order that he might give his ſervant directions accordingly. I immediately removed myſelf and ſuite to York houſe, from whence I wrote to my wife entreating her return, and profeſſing, as I juſtly might, my ſorrow for what had happened.

The terms of our re-union were, that I ſhould immediately reſign Agnes De Courci to her protection; and pledge my honour never to enquire how ſhe had diſpoſed of her; but to reſt confident in her generoſity.

That I ſhould make her acquainted with the *family*, *friends*, and *connections* of the ſaid Agnes; and the manner and place where I had firſt known her; and indeed every circumſtance reſpecting the *girl*, as ſhe contemptuouſly called her.

Thoſe terms *I could* not comply with; Lady Mary *would* accept no other; and the Earl's pride keeping warm his daughter's jealouſy, my letters were returned unopened; my meſſengers treated with perſonal inſult; and finally, young Butler came to me, and very reſpectfully hoped I would pardon his obeying the commands of the Earl, and Lady Mary; who commiſſioned him to wait on me, with a draft of the articles of our ſeparation; which, with infinite concern, he begged to leave for my peruſal.

The Earl's ſpirit is a princely one, and his dau hter is in this reſpect indeed his daughter; but I believe, Major, I need not tell you, I re-

jected

jected all offered advantage, and declined every claim on her fortune—we are now parted, she says to meet no more—pass the blot, Major, perhaps it was not a tear.

But why you ask do I not explain the mystery that distresses her, if I can do it with honour to myself?

It is possible, Major, that a man may have indispensable reasons for concealing his actions, who has none to be *ashamed* of *them*; and to entrust you with a secret, I actually want courage, yes, Mary, my beloved wife, it is in thy noble, thy upright heart, the dagger must be planted. Great God! whose decrees are inscrutable, by what a combination of events, what improbable, and nearly impossible means, am I become the instrument of thy vengeance on the offspring of the guilty? yet dare I murmur, when perhaps the severe task, which honour and justice impose on me, is the only thing that could mitigate the pain I am doomed to inflict?

Julia Neville, heiress to the house of Ruthven, and the immense wealth of her father, is a lovely girl, her mother lives in this her only child; the Earl reckons on quarterings; at least equal to his own, for her heiress's lozenge; and builds much on seeing her nobly espoused; when, as he plans it, his title may descend to her second son: Lord Morden, eldest son to the Marquis of L, and heir to a dukedom, offers proposals, which are at this time under consideration; Lord M. is dissipated; Julia, thoughtless; this marriage may be honourable, but it cannot be happy; Lady Mary disapproved it from the first. The equal familiarity, and the terms brother, and sister, in which my Reuben and Miss Neville have lived, would, I

hoped, have prevented their imbibing a warmer ſentiment for each other; the contrary however has happened, they are mutually attached: my wife, whoſe generous love for me, knew not the law of prudence, contrary to my wiſh, ſaw, and encouraged their growing paſſion; ſhe had no idea, that a youth formed under *my* eye, and educated by *me*, could be an unelegible match for any woman; my daughter is charming, ſhe would ſay, ſhe will alſo be very rich, and that paltry advantage is the only one ſhe has over Reuben Moncraſs; theſe were the effuſions of a fond heart, not the arguments of reaſon. I could not endure to know the worthy old Earl's laudable ſchemes, for the aggrandizement of his family, ſhould always be obſtructed by me; I expreſſed myſelf with great warmth on this ſubject, both to Lady Mary and Reuben: the latter, I am happy to ſay, is a lad of honour; paſſion ſpoke one language, juſtice another, he preferred the laſt, and coincided with his father. I had formed a plan to ſend him to Portugal, where under the auſpices of his mother's family, he might have acquired at once the advantages of travel, and military experience: the Earl forgot in *his* anger, the reſpect due to my character, as well as his own, and charged me with meanly plotting to gain his granddaughter, and her wealth, for my ſon; after this, you will be ſurpriſed to hear that I actually, *now*, have it in view to haſten the match, which I before ſo earneſtly oppoſed; I have accordingly relinquiſhed my firſt intention, of ſending my ſon abroad, and ceaſed to blame, tho' I would not, at preſent, be known to approve of his love for Julia. Lady Mary will ſoon be reconciled to an union

union ſhe once encouraged, and receive the little rebel into grace.

But Oh! my gentle Agnes, where is the maternal boſom, that ſhould ſuſtain thy drooping lovelineſs, kiſs thy falling tear, aſſert thy right, and avenge thy wrong! thou poor deſerted victim, ſhall Moncraſs forſake thee? ſhall he ſacrifice to his own private peace, the right which juſtice and misfortune ſhould render dearer than the life-blood which flows from his heart? under what plea ſhould he ſeek a ſanction for that innate baſeneſs, which could reject the ſupplications of the ſaint who conſigned thee to his protection?—What? abandon thee to defamation, give up thy ſpotleſs fame to the rude tongue of ſlander, to gratify the fond, the ſelfiſh longings of my own heart! Oh memory! dreſs not the paſt in ſuch ſeducing forms; avaunt, ye ſelfiſh tempters, I turn from recollection, from the aſpirations of unbounded love, to injured innocence; to the modeſt *ſweetneſs* of Agnes De-Courci.—Thou unſuſpecting purity, how unconſcious art thou, of the pangs I ſuffer for thee?—Her amiable ſenſibility renders her anxious to ſooth the diſquiet of my mind, ſhe has no conception it is poſſible *ſhe* can have given pain to the wife of her benefactor as ſhe *will* ſtyle me, much leſs does ſhe conceive, ſhe is the ſole cauſe of a ſeparation, ſhe conſtantly deplores; nor would I for worlds her delicacy ſhould be wounded by the ſhocking intelligence; to prevent this is now my chief care, I have forbid my ſervants ſpeaking at all on the ſubject, and ſee ſo few people, it is next to impoſſible it can happen.

I ſuppoſe I have aggravated my ſins, and perhaps incurred your cenſure, Major, by a ſtep

which I acknowledge I have taken for my *own* gratification.

Deprived of every other comfort, I have brought Agnes to Belle Vue; I dare not conſign her to oblivion, ſhe is born to ſhine the ornament of ſociety; her beauty, elegance, and above all, the captivating graces of her converſation, the juſtneſs of her ſentiments, and the poignancy of her wit, were not beſtowed on her for concealment.

And are theſe then you, aſk, the claims to which the peace of Lady Mary is ſacrificed? forbear, Major, to probe the heart which *would*, but cannot unfold itſelf to the eye of friendſhip. No, my friend, her claims are thoſe of birth, virtue, and misfortunes, and Moncraſs is her protector. Farewell,

MONCRASS.

Do not forget the young man I recommended to your good offices, with the ſecretary of war; Lady Mary wiſhes much to tempt him from his hermitage; he is the moſt eccentric being in the world; he knows not or believes not, that man was formed for ſociety; he vegetates, and with very fine talents, believes *that* is all the buſineſs he has in the world Mrs. Butler, a charming little creature, who calls him brother, was brought up with him by an odd old woman, whoſe own romantic turn, as well as her little fortune, ſhe left divided between Mrs. B. and this Harley; young Butler, happily for the lady, took her out of the trammels of romance, very ſoon after her aunt's death; and ſhe is become ſo ſenſible of the wrong bias her mind received, and ſo deſirous

Harley

Harley ſhould ſhare her advantages, that, I believe, it is at her requeſt, through the intereſt of her mother-in-law, that Lady Mary patronizes him; however, be that as it may, it will afford me great pleaſure, to ſhew my beloved wife how much I reſpect her commands.

LET-

LETTER II.

Mrs. Butler to Lady Mary Moncraſs.

Soho-Square, London.

NEVER, my dear Lady Mary, have I met with any thing ſo diſtreſſing as the accident which prevents my attending you in *your* ſtill greater misfortune; the diſlocation of a limb, is at any time, and in any circumſtance, a grievous calamity; and a reſtoration to its uſe, ſo great a bleſſing, that I feel myſelf, I hope, for the firſt time in my life, guilty of ingratitude to my Maker, by giving way to a fretful impatience at my confinement. I have ſeveral times attempted to begin my journey to Bath, my ancle is ſet, and every dangerous ſymptom conquered, but I cannot bear the motion of my carriage, altho' I have ſent it to Hatchet's, to have it new hung, on purpoſe. My temper, which you have ſaid was ſo eaſy, it was not in the power of common events to diſcompoſe it,—is no longer ſo;—I am miſerable at my inability to come to you; I have loſt the firſt of bleſſings, the will to be pleaſed: if content be the fountain of felicity, no wonder its reverſe ſhould produce ſo many evils: I am degenerating into one of the peſts of ſociety, an ill tempered old woman; my gentle daughter in-law, with all her patience, will, I fear, be weary of her office, ſhe has been the ſweeteſt nurſe in the world; my ſon actually runs away from me;

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in a word, madam, General Moncraſs has not only robbed *you* of your peace; he has alſo deſtroyed *mine*, and he has injured me yet more, he has leſſened my eſtimation of God's moſt noble work, or indeed filled me with doubts of there being ſuch a thing, in exiſtence; where ſhall we ſeek an honeſt man after ſuch a falling off in him? it is not only himſelf and you, he has actually diſhonoured mankind; I am all wonder, amazement, and indignation.

Your billet is the herald of grief, and wrote in ſo incoherent a ſtyle, that had not the ſame meſſenger brought Lord Ruthven's inſtruction to my ſon, I could not have comprehended its import.

Your amiable, and undeviating attention to the health of your father, is at this period almoſt as great a hardſhip on me, as my own confinement; ſince I flatter myſelf the ſame friendly heart, which has had the happineſs to conſole you, under ſo many diſagreeable events heretofore, would not *now* decreaſe in power, when its will, and wiſhes, are more lively than ever; withhold not, I implore you, my dear Lady Mary, the particulars of your heart-wounding ſtory, from your faithful Conſtance; gratify the moſt painful curioſity I ever felt; and again try the efficacy of the ſame remedy, which once was uſed to relieve you; ſuffer me to participate in this, as I have done in all your former troubles.

Will the world, you aſk, ſpare you? will it not rather conſider the ingratitude and perfidy of the General, as a proper puniſhment due to the weakneſs that would purſue him in violation of female delicacy?

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The world, my amiable friend, has ſeen with what exemplary fortitude, patience, and reſignation, you bore your hard deſtiny with Neville; the laudability of the motives that influenced your firſt choice are well known; and the world bears loud teſtimony to that generoſity of ſentiment, which induced you to beſtow your invaluable ſelf, and large fortune, on one whom it eſteemed a model of worth and honour; and behold a miracle is wrought in your favour; public report ſpeaks, for once, the language of truth; it is unanimous in condemning the General, and acquitting my friend.

Major Melroſe called this morning to inform my ſon, the commiſſion for Mr. Harley lay at the war office; I did not ſee him, he lamented your domeſtic misfortune, my ſon ſays, very feelingly.

Mrs. Butler, and indeed every perſon who has the pleaſure to know Mr. Harley, wiſhes to ſee him diveſted of his penchant for rural ſimplicity; he has really fine qualities; and a very good underſtanding; there is alſo, as your ladyſhip has obſerved, an intereſting ſomething in his manner, which never fails to ſpeak to the heart; mine, I confeſs, is much attached to him, and I join very cordially in the general opinion, that he would be an amiable inhabitant of the great world.

Do you know Mr. Montford, Mrs. Butler's rich uncle? he promiſed, he ſays, to his ſiſter, the late Mrs. Ann Montford, that he would leave his large fortune between her two pets; Caroline ſtill ſtands high in his good opinion, but poor Harley, if he continues to live at the hermitage, will, I fear, be totally out of favor: the great regard he has for the young man is, perhaps,

the

the beſt excuſe for the petulance, which ever breaks out when his manner of life is the ſubject of converſation; he will give, he ſwears, one half of his fortune, as he promiſed, to Mrs. Butler, but if Harley perſiſts in his indolence and inactivity, he will build an hoſpital with the other, for idiots, who, like himſelf, have toiled, and moiled, for other people's children. Caroline is generally in tears on thoſe occaſions; I never knew a ſtronger ſiſterly affection; and as to James, I only wiſh his eldeſt brother and himſelf had ſo great an affection for each other, as ſubſiſts between him and young Harley.

We are unanimous in our opinion, that if the young man could be prevailed on to accept the commiſſion, it would be productive of every change in his ſentiments, his friends can deſire; but your ladyſhip muſt decide for us; it is not a deſireable thing to receive favours from people whoſe conduct deprives them of our eſteem: and we are by no means ſure *you* would approve of his accepting the commiſſion from the general, ſhould his inclination coincide with the deſire of his friends, which is not at all a ſettled point. It is very hard to eradicate the impreſſions made at an early period of life, on ſenſible minds, the more ſenſible, the more likely will they be to retain their firſt prejudices, how abſurd ſoever theſe may be; more eſpecially if the appearance of reaſon can be poſſibly introduced to ſupport the weak fabric on which they are founded. It required a very ſtrong attachment to wean Mrs. Butler from her predilection for that pleaſant odd retirement, where ſhe was brought up; ſhe very innocently ſtill avers, that tho' her huſband's preſence has power to render every place a paradiſe to her, yet the moment ſhe is alone her mind

mind reverts to the dear hermitage, which ſhe prefers to any of the fine ſeats ſhe has ſeen; we were there laſt ſummer, it is merely a pleaſant ſpot, in a fine country, turned and twiſted in all ſorts of ſhapes, except thoſe which common ſenſe would approve, yet it is pretty, you cannot help being pleaſed, at the ſame moment that you are convinced the walks, and embelliſhments, are the flights of a romantic imagination, too warm for reaſon, too abſtruſe for probability; *here*, you ſee nymphs deſigned for emblems of the coldeſt chaſtity, exalted on pedeſtals, round which are ſcrolls of paſſionate verſes; *there* an Anchorite preſents you with a tranſlation from Ovid, and in the moſt retired part of the grove a winged Cupid, and a death's head, occupy each a corner on an altar raiſed to Diana, with fifty other abſurdities equally characteriſtic of the late owner's mind; where love for Mr. Neville, and religion, are ſaid to have formed an unaccountable mixture to the hour of her death; nay, the ſcandalous chronicle has ſet young Harley down for her ſon, by that unhappy man: But tho' Mrs. Montford's character was an extraordinary one, all who knew her acquitted it of impurity.

It reſts with you, Lady Mary, whether we ſhall call this young man to a part on the buſy ſtage of life; or leave him to the impulſe which, *he* ſays, impels him to conclude his exiſtence, as he began it in the humble practice of private virtue, in the exerciſe of benevolence, and in the purſuit of mental knowledge.

But do you forgive me, Lady Mary, for writing ſo much on a ſubject, ſo little intereſting to your

your preſent feelings? none of my family would take a ſingle ſtep, where General Moncraſs was concerned, without your direction:—and after all, a ſubject that will carry a mind corroding with ſorrow, out of itſelf, muſt be acceptable: if therefore, it has a moment diverted your attention from the pangs ingratitude ever leaves in a generous boſom, the relief will be mutual, as it has given a ſhort ceſſation to the ſympathetic concern ever felt for my deareſt couſin, by her faithful

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

If the recital of your misfortune affect you too much, let Julia be your amanuenſis.—I ſhall be wretched till I hear from you.

LETTER

LETTER III.

Lady Mary Moncraſs to Mrs. Butler.

Bath.

NO, Conſtance, no;—painful as is the taſk, no pen can deſcribe the dreadful anguiſh which preys on me, but my own. Alas! and can it be?—have I endured a worſe than Turkiſh ſlavery, when the mind, regardleſs of any other hardſhip, felt only the diſappointment of its firſt fond, its blaſted hope?—And did Providence ſignalize itſelf in favor of my breaking heart, by freeing me from a tyrant I abhorred, by returning to my faithful boſom the man I adored, when even hope was no more for this?—Did I exult in the poſſeſſion of wealth; did I ſeek him in the cave of obſcurity; and was I willing to unite my ſplendid fortune with an indigent wanderer, to be inſulted, injured, and diſhonored?——Faithleſs man! he thinks not of the dotage that would have died for him: enjoying now the eſtates of his anceſtors, by the repeal of the ſentence which conſigned his rebellious family to diſgrace, and confiſcated their inheritance: he forgets the diſtance from which my love reached him;—fatal meanneſs! he abandoned me in my youth; left me to the tyranny of cuſtom, to be diſpoſed of by my father, as pride or caprice directed;—yet I meanly ſought him, ſought him among the wretched herd, whoſe crimes had rendered them aliens to their country:—*and now*; but this is not what my

my friend is impatient for;—this is invective, and not narrative. Oh Conſtance! where, or how ſhall I begin?—Julia!—can Julia paint the anguiſh ſhe is a ſtranger to?—can ſhe recount the injuries ſhe has no conception of?—Oh no! let her ſtill remain in ignorance of her mother's weakneſs: I ſhould bluſh to let *her* know how much I deſerve the fate I have met: you only ever ſhall witneſs the pangs I endure; to others I appear ſupported by a conſcious dignity, and wounded pride; while the agony that tears my ſoul, the floods of ſorrow that now ſtain my paper,—explain to *you* that the real anguiſh which diſtracts me, flows from ill-requited love: ſo in the time of Mr. Neville, when his libertiniſm firſt;—and then his tyranny and avarice, deprived me of every joy of ſociety.—My patience, my placidity, held me up as an example of conjugal obedience and forbearance:—alas! the ſhallow world knew not that imagination had raiſed an altar to a wandering, a firſt unfortunate lover, in my mind; where every paſſion retired to pay adoration; and left me, totally, and equally impenetrable to the ſenſations of either joy or grief, from common events, except where my child was concerned;—there, indeed, I felt, that ſtrong as my paſſion for Moncraſs was, the ties of maternal fondneſs, would diſpute with him the empire of my heart:—but, let me not dwell on the paſt,—the delightful paſt;—when, tho' torn for ever, as I *then* believed, from all my hopes, I thought of him with undeſcribable pleaſure;—ſaw him, tho poor, and a fugitive, robed in honor, and wrapt in integrity; believed it was exceſs of love induced him to leave me, and fondly

fondly purſued his deſtiny with my unceaſing prayers.—Oh! what a change!—Cruel Moncraſs!—Why haſt thou torn the illuſion from my ſenſes?—Why muſt the angel of my adoration be changed to a demon of darkneſs?—Yet, yet I wander from my purpoſe, and you are yet in ſuſpence.

M. M.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

Lady Mary Moncraſs in continuation.

Bath.

YOU know, that laſt winter, one of the happieſt among the happy, I attended my father to Bath: the paralytic ſtroke, by which he was attacked, rendered *his* going neceſſary, and I could not bear he ſhould take the journey alone. I had then been five years the wife of General Moncraſs; whoſe unremitting tenderneſs, and apparent increaſe of love, left me no wiſh ungratified: he watched every turn of my countenance; could penetrate into my moſt ſecret thoughts; and his judgment, on every occaſion, appeared to be the reſult of mine: our ſentiments, manners, and inclinations, were the ſame; one ſoul ſeemed to animate our bodies; and ſo entirely were we paired, that notwithſtanding the difference in our religion, I exulted in the certainty of being finally judged by the ſame God, and receiving, with him, the ſame immortal Fiat.

In this happy ſecurity I remained, till the week before we left Bath; where, one morning, the Swiſs delivered my huſband a note, which I ſhould not have obſerved, but from the conſternation viſible in his countenance; he ſtarted up; enquired eagerly for the perſon who had brought it; and on being told it was a chair-man, called for his hat, and abruptly left the houſe.

Surpriſe, aſtoniſhment, and a kind of inſtinctive terror, a dread of ſomething, I knew not what, took

took poſſeſſion of my mind: my father ſtarted; he feared, he ſaid, it was a challenge; my apprehenſion coinciding with his opinions, I fainted inſtantly away.

I recovered to uncertain terror: he did not return till time to dreſs;—and then, ſo altered; his countenance ſo pale, ſo woe-begone, my heart ſunk at the ſight.—

I flew to his arms; implored him to make me the partner of his ſorrow, as I had long been of his joys:—conceive my aſtoniſhment! he did indeed preſs me to his heart, but retired to his chamber without ſpeaking. Julia followed, I *could not*; the poor child hung about him, threw herſelf at his feet, called him father; implored him to reveal the cauſe of his diſtreſs,—but all in vain; tears burſt from his eyes; he begged to be alone.

Diſtracted, and alarmed, I queſtioned the Swiſs; he only knew a chair-man had left the note: I have poor talents for intrigue,—nevertheleſs, there was ſomething ſo myſterious in all this, that I aſked Gallini if he ſhould know the chair-man? he anſwered, he believed he ſhould: I gave him orders to find him out, and bring him to me.

The ſervant had not left the room a moment, before I repented of what I had done:—my Reuben, thought I, is in affliction; his heart is free from guile; he is incapable of vice; *ſhall I*, by prying into the cauſe of his grief encreaſe it? or, by tampering meanly with his ſervant, let them ſee I can ſuſpect the beſt of human hearts?—No, Reuben, I will not ſo injure thee!

I rang, to countermand the orders I had given the Swiſs.

It was too late, he was gone to execute my commands;

commands; and in a few moments brought the chair-man.

I was now exceedingly embarraſſed, to ſend the man away, after I had taken ſo much pains to find him, before I had aſked a ſingle queſtion, would, I thought look odd; and to aſk of him any leading one, was an inſult to my huſband: at length, I bade Gallini bring him in, and wait.

Friend, ſaid I, you brought a note here this morning, from which, I apprehend, ſome danger to the General, as I have reaſon to think it is a challenge.—

A challenge, my Lady, anſwered the fellow;—no, no; you need not fear that; the gentlewoman did not look as if ſhe could hurt his honor:—why ſhe fell into fits for joy, at ſight of him; I was fain to fetch the doctor.—

That moment was the tomb of my peace; all the joy of confidential love inſtantly deſerted me: the ſmiling train of unſuſpecting faith, of undeviating ſincerity, forſook my ſad heart;—and oh! with what fell gueſts were the miſerable vacancies ſupplied; I trembled:—"a woman in *fits* for *joy!*"—who?—what could ſhe be?—yet, even then, in that horrid moment, I was not totally off my guard. I diſmiſſed the fellow, and immediately ſent Curtis to the White Hart: ſhe returned in an hour, and her intelligence diſtracted me.

Two ladies had come there in a poſt-chaiſe; they eagerly enquired where General Moncraſs might be found, and diſpatched a billet to him:—the General immediately followed the meſſenger. One of the ladies was extremely ill, and fainted in his arms; the other retired, and left Moncraſs with the invalid: they were ſhut up together four hours before he left the inn. The lady was then very

very much indiſpoſed,—but had, notwithſtanding, ordered horſes early in the morning.

Dinner was ſerved; my faithleſs huſband excuſed himſelf from coming down; he had letters to write of the laſt importance, and begged we would diſpenſe with his company:—my father, poor man! enjoys his meals; and Julia, having her favorite Reuben with her, was too happy to perceive her mother's miſery:—*but for me*; yet I need not deſcribe to you, how the time paſſed with *me*.

At ſix, he ordered his chair; and returned at ſeven. I was really indiſpoſed, and my looks indicated the diſorder of my mind.—Deceitful to the laſt, he even affected concern, and dropt a tear upon my hand; I diſguiſed my indignation; and he retired, at my requeſt, to a ſeparate apartment, glad, no doubt, of an excuſe ſo conformable to his own wiſhes.

At five in the morning, he was again out: I ſaw his haſty, perturbed, his guilty ſtep, paſſing quick under my window. I had, let me confeſs my weakneſs, been up the whole night; and *now* only threw myſelf in agony on the bed.

He returned home before ten, (our breakfaſt hour.) A more placid look, now concealed the dark thoughts that occupied his mind; Curtis told *him*, I had reſted ill, and was *now* ſleeping; he excuſed himſelf from joining my father, and Julia, at breakfaſt, and ſhut himſelf in the library.

Curtis took the opportunity to renew her enquiries at the inn: the women were gone; one of them was ſo ill, that Doctor Cary had been ſent for, who adminiſtered a cordial medicine, which had, in ſome meaſure, compoſed her: he ſtrenuouſly oppoſed her undertaking a journey, and told the

the landlady, he ſhould not be ſurpriſed if ſhe expired on the road; but ſhe was not to be deterred.

In the morning, the General was in her chamber very early: he carried her in his arms to the chaiſe; embraced them both ſeveral times, and ſo extremely did this ſeparation affect him, after he had left the carriage,—twice did he return, and as often were the tender adieus repeated: this is the ſum of what could be learned at the inn.—

It was now, my dear Conſtance, I reſolved, for the firſt time, in my turn, to play the hypocrite: I ſtill affected to be unable to leave my chamber. Three days elapſed; then, he ſaid, he had buſineſs of importance in London, which required his immediate preſence: tho' this manner of announcing our ſeparation was as novel as criminal, I took no notice, but engaged a relation of Curtis to follow him, and obſerve all his actions.

Imagine, my friend, what I ſuffered in this painful interval: many were the hours in which I was loſt to a ſenſe of my ſorrow!--many, in which I gave myſelf up to rage, and madneſs; and many, in which I beſought the Almighty to ſtrengthen me with patience. At length, reaſon, and reflection, came to my aid;—pride alſo, female pride, contributed to fix my reſolution; which once formed, I determined invariably to adhere to.

At the end of a week, my agent returned, having watched Moncraſs in all his manœuvres, till he left London; and had come as far on his way back as Lord B-s, where he meant to ſtay a day or two; and my agent having no means of getting acceſs to the family, he had there left him, and returned with his intelligence to me.

On leaving Bath,—my God!—How have I patience to give you this detail?—What, but my unalterable friendſhip, my reſpect to your opinion, my confidence in your affection, could give me ſpirits, or power to retrace events, which have left me the moſt miſerable of beings?

On leaving Bath, General Moncraſs rode acroſs the country to Dover, where he again met the two women; one of whom he put on board the packet, under the care of a female attendant, who had been waiting there for her: the other he conveyed to London, and placed her as the daughter of a deceaſed officer, in the houſe of Madame De-Vallmont, the widow of a French merchant; a woman, as it appeared, of reſpectable character. The young creature is beautiful, and well-educated; Moncraſs viſited her conſtantly; domeſtics were immediately engaged, and every thing attended to, that could add to her pleaſure, or convenience; every appendage to rank was ſupplied with that eager avidity which mark the favors of men at a certain period of life, to beautiful young women: his time, while in London, was wholly devoted to this new bauble;—ſilks, muſlins, jewels, and laces, were the morning oblations paid to this, his idol: his eſtabliſhed, regular hours, were ſacrificed at her ſhrine, and ſcarce could he prevail on himſelf to leave her at midnight.

This account almoſt petrified me; nevertheleſs, I had formed my reſolution, and determined to be influenced by facts *only*, free from the prejudice of paſſion; I therefore waited his return, with a kind of determined impatience I cannot deſcribe.

On the eve of the ſecond day after my agent left

left him, he arrived; when in the preſence of my father, and Julia, I taxed him with the circumſtances I have related, and demanded an explanation of his conduct.

Perhaps, my dear friend, you may think of this ſtep, as I do myſelf, with ſome degree of cenſure; I own, my heart has frequently reproached me with a want of delicacy, a want of reſpect, for the pride of his ſpirit: my father has too much in his power, to be conſidered as an impartial judge; and perhaps, the confeſſion I expected, was too great an humiliation to an independent ſpirit; at this period of the affair, I ſtand ſelf-condemned; I feel my conduct was unworthy a daughter of the houſe of Ruthven; it was indeed diſgraceful to philanthropy:—nor, I bluſh to ſay it, did I ſtop here; *my* whole part in the ſcene was degrading to my principles; and muſt have left an impreſſion that will help, for ſome time, to quiet the remorſe which General Moncraſs will one day feel, on a retroſpect of our love, and our parting: my father's reſentment, if poſſible exceeded mine; his tenderneſs, and always partial opinion of his only child, placed her in a rank of beings above the common order of women; he had always reſented Neville's tyranny, and his particularities; but Neville actually adored his daughter; that unhappy man's unbounded fondneſs for me, contraſted with his own unamiable diſpoſition, were perpetual ſources of diſquiet to himſelf, as well as miſery to all about him; few men knew the world better my unconquerable coldneſs filled him with diſtruſt, not of my principles, but of my affection; but ſtill, he conſidered me in the ſame partial light as my father did.

What a ſcene then, was here opening for the Earl: he waited, with trembling impatience, for the General's anſwer; who heſitated, changed colour, and turned to the window.

His conduct was equal, in my father's opinion, to a confeſſion of the moſt blameable nature:—no longer able to conquer his rage, he gave it vent in reproaches; upbraided Moncraſs with the indigence from which my fondneſs raiſed him, with the rebellious ſpirit of his family; the pains all mine had taken, to get him reſtored to his paternal inheritance; and the honor done him by our alliance: you will hardly believe it of me, Conſtance; but ſo much had the narrow paſſion of jealouſy lowered me, I joined in my father's invectives, and proudly aſked if his ſick foreigner would, *or* could do, as much for him as I had done.

Ah! Mary, replied he, after a long pauſe, why will you thus urge a temper, too like your own, to ſuffer indignity with forbearance?—My Lord, turning to my father, did I not venerate your age, and reſpect you as the father of Lady Mary; I ſhould tell you, how infinitely a grateful ſpirit overpays all obligations;—it is a ſpirit never poſſeſſed by the mean remembrancer of paſt favors: and I am convinced, I feel for your lordſhip, what you could not for me, were we to change characters;—I could not upbraid my loweſt dependant, as you have done me.—As to you, Lady Mary, you will one day be convinced of my *gratitude*, ſince you demand it.——

I deſpiſe your gratitude, Sir; I will not accept it:—if you would convince me, my peace is of the leaſt importance to you; tell me the claims thoſe women have on you:—her, at Mr. De-

Vallmont's

Vallmont's in particular,—her, on whom you are ſquandering your fortune.——

How, Mary, interrupted he, have I then been watched? Have you deſcended ſo much from your own character, as to ſet ſpies on your huſband's conduct?

The event juſtified the act, Sir.—

So it has, joined my father.

Dear Madam, cried Julia, throwing herſelf at my feet, have patience; moderate your anger; the General will, I am ſure, clear his own honor.

He raiſed the weeping girl to his breaſt.

My father ſternly commanded her to retire: and then, addreſſing him in a ſolemn tone of voice:

General Moncraſs, ſaid he, you are called upon, by *my* daughter, once Lady Mary Ruthven, *now your wife*, for an explanation of your conduct:—It will not, in my opinion, admit of any; nevertheleſs, ſhe has aſked it; and I, her father, and protector, demand it.

I now ſaw the impropriety of my conduct in making the Earl a party to the buſineſs; he trembled with rage, and, with a furious aſpect, waited the General's anſwer.

After a ſolemn, and affecting ſilence, my huſband turned to me; and taking my hand, intreated me to confide in his honor: do not, ſaid he, ſeek to know what will ſtrike at your deareſt intereſt—believe me incapable of wronging you—Time will convince you.

So, Conſtance, I was to forbear enquiries, becauſe there, confeſſedly, was *that* to know, that would wound my deareſt intereſt; I was to ſit tamely down, knowing my huſband had a miſtreſs,

nor dare to aſk what I ſhould *grieve to know*; who, Conſtance, could bear this? was I not right at laſt, in telling him coolly, I would wait *that time*, before we met again? yes, there I feel I was myſelf; I acted conſiſtent with my own character.

I haſtily quitted the room with my father; the General retired to his apartment: the Earl's carriage was ordered, and we left Bath immediately.

Curtis remained to pack up our wardrobe; Julia's Alice only attended us:—you will conclude, I had a ſtronger reaſon for leaving my woman, than merely the care of my cloaths: Curtis is an obſervant and ſenſible woman; her conſtant attendance on my perſon, and having once been the only converſable female I was ſuffered to have about me, created a kind of friendſhip in me, which is repaid by her, with a faithful, and reſpectful attachment; my will is the rule of her actions, and I know her incapable of abuſing my confidence—She, of all our domeſtics, was the only perſon who was acquainted with the occaſion of our ſeparation:—I knew ſhe would obſerve on the General's conduct, without any exaggeration.

Nothing, ſhe ſays, could equal his ſurprize, when he found we were gone: Gallini rapped at his door, when dinner was ſerved, and was anſwered without its being opened, that he was indiſpoſed, and ſhould not go down.

The faithful Swiſs, has been as old, and reſpected a ſervant to him, as Curtis has to me: he ventured to aſk if his maſter would have any thing ſerved up in his apartment; he was bid not to be troubleſome; and the faithful domeſtic joined Curtis, both, with tears deploring our unhappineſs.

neſs. At nine he rang for coffee, and was then told we had left the houſe eight hours. Curtis was ordered up; he could not at firſt credit her, but was at length ſatisfied the fact was as they repreſented it: he immediately ſat down to write a letter, and ſent an expreſs after us with it. The letter contained general profeſſions of love and honor,—but not a ſyllable about his bauble at Madame De-Vallmont's: he has ſince ſent others, but as they did not lead to a vindication, and as he declined entering on the ſubject of moſt conſequence to me, I have now made up my mind, and do not open any letters from him.—

Made up my mind, Conſtance, did I ſay? Oh no!—The barbed arrow lies there, rankling with the utmoſt malignity!—My perſon is, it is true, divided from him, but he ſtill occupies all my thoughts, ſtill maſters every ſenſe, and embitters every moment of my exiſtence;—Oh that I could forget!

"*The form ſo pleaſing, and the heart ſo kind;*
"*All paſs before me in remembrance dear,—*
"*Thought follows thought, and tear ſucceeds to*
"*tear.*"

Let me bury theſe mean follies deep in your boſom, and my own;—for, has he not, Conſtance, in defiance of all ſenſe of honor, juſtice, and compaſſion?—has he not thrown off the maſk, and taken her home to his own houſe, given her my place at his villa?—He has carried her among his tenants, and lives a hermit where he reigned a prince. But vainly do the vicious fancy they can hide themſelves from the ſhame of a bad act: "Fame, with its feet on earth, and head in the ſkies," will find out their ſecret receſs, and drag them to public view. And, could he expect my

wrongs would be openly known, and not as openly talked of, and reſented?—But there he has his *favorite* all to himſelf; no viſitors diſturb his ſolitude; a few of the diſſipated men only, dine with him; and ſenſual obſervers ſpeak highly of the beauty, and accompliſhments, of the creature who preſides at his table; Madame De-Vallmont ſerves as a convenient companion:—aſtoniſhing! that a woman, who through a ſeries of unmerited calamities, maintained an irreproachable character ſhould accept of ſo humiliating a ſituation, as duenna to a kept woman;—but intereſt, the idol of mankind, was, no doubt, the bait.

As to our young hermit, I am as earneſt to have him enter a world, where, I think, he will ſhine; as Mr. Montford or any of you can be:—and, although *I* have reaſon to reſent General Moncraſs's private treatment of me, no other perſon has; if therefore, Major Melroſe has had the goodneſs to get him a commiſſion; by all means, prevail on him to accept it: and, if you would get the counſellor to hint, how proper it would be for Harley to wait on the General, and return him thanks for his favor; he would, perhaps, give you an account of the manner they live in, nearer truth than any I have yet heard:—at the ſame ſame time, my dear Conſtance, you muſt be careful not to mention this, as *my* wiſh, to him, or Mr. Butler; but if Mrs. Butler was to engage him in a particular correſpondence, you would be able to tell me all he communicates to them, on the ſubject next my heart:—If you are ſhocked at the meanneſs to which I ſtoop about this ungrateful man, you muſt love as I do, and be as wretched, before you can properly decide on the inconſiſtency, in the character of, dear Conſtance, your's ever,

M. MONCRASS.

LETTER

LETTER V,

James Butler, Eſq. to Edward Harley, Eſq.

London.

I AM, this inſtant, ſetting out on the circuit; have therefore only time to ſay, a commiſſion lies ready ſigned for you, at the war office; and it is the hope of all your friends you will accept it. General Moncraſs, who is now in your neighbourhood, is the founder of your good fortune. You may perhaps think it neceſſary to wait on him, and I am authorized by Lady Moncraſs to tell you: ſhe will be particularly pleaſed, at every mark of reſpect you ſhew the General: ſhe is very much gratified by his remembrance of her recommendation; and adviſes you to cultivate his friendſhip, by every means in your power.

Adieu, dear Edward. Caroline bids you prepare a very ſmart uniform, in which ſhe will introduce you to her circle; many of whoſe enquiries, after our hermit, are very flattering.

JAMES BUTLER.

LETTER VI.

Edward Harley, Eſq. to James Butler, Eſq

Hermitage.

Dear James,

I AM much concerned, General Moncraſs ſhould have condeſcended to intereſt himſelf in the fortunes of ſuch an inſenſible being as myſelf: take the trouble to ſignify my concern to Caroline, for not giving her a beau brother; but the thing is out of nature:—If ſhe would ſee me in my beſt attire, it muſt be at my hermitage, when I am decked out to receive her; ſeriouſly, dear Butler, here I muſt vegetate, and I have fixed on the green ſod, under which I mean to be laid. Adieu,

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER VII.

James Butler, Eſq. to Edward Harley, Eſq.

Soho-Square, London.

YOUR laſt letter greatly diſtreſſes me, and Caroline is inconſolable; it is needleſs to ſay, how dear you are to us both; the uncommon ſweetneſs of your ſiſter's diſpoſition, the ſoftneſs of her manners, and the infant attachment between you, may give the ſemblance of greater tenderneſs to her profeſſion; but believe me, Harley, her feelings for you, her ſolicitude for your welfare, cannot be ſtronger than mine—We were early united in the bonds of friendſhip; bonds, which death only, I truſt, will break; from the time of our firſt acquaintance, when Lady Mary prevailed on Mrs. Montford to ſuffer your tutor to receive me under his care, to the period, when it was in ſome degree neceſſary, to change happy for wiſe; our ſtudies, our pleaſures, our ſentiments, and purſuits, were the ſame; how comes it therefore Edward, we differ ſo much on a point the moſt eſſential to our future welfare?

A reſpectable ancient, compared life to the olympic games; where ſome ventured for glory, others for gain; *while* a third party, and thoſe by no means the moſt contemptible, choſe to be ſpectators; but it did not enter the head of the ſage obſerver, that any would be added to thoſe, who in full poſſeſſion of mental, as well as bodily ſtrength,

ſtrength, could be content to exiſt without action, or obſervation.

I have dedicated time, I can ill ſpare, from the buſineſs of my profeſſion, to argue the matter coolly with you, Edward; and to draw from you the real ſtate of your ſituation, and inclination.

General Moncraſs has obtained for you a commiſſion in the army, which you refuſe to accept:

Admiral Mizen offers you his intereſt in the navy.

The Chancellor, in memory of family obligations, and the great reſpect he bore Mrs. Montford, wiſhes you to enter the Temple, and go through the neceſſary gradations to qualify yourſelf, for *his* particular protection.

Mr. Montford, has purchaſed the next preſentation to one of the beſt livings in England, where the incumbent is very old, on the idea, that your ſerious turn may induce you to embrace a ſacerdotal profeſſion; he alſo kept his name in the firm of the buſineſs, by which his own large fortune has been accumulated; in hopes, that if you decline every other propoſition *that*, may at laſt tempt you, to ſhake off the laſſitude of your diſpoſition, and adopt a mode of life the moſt pleaſing to him.

Thus, Edward, the army, navy, law, church, and trade, have been ſucceſſively offered to your adoption.

We all lament your—what ſhall I call it, inſtability, or inflexibility: one, or other of thoſe unamiable extremes, it certainly is; it is a reflection on your own underſtanding, and a ſource of perpetual diſquiet to your friends; the tears of your adopted ſiſter are ever flowing; oh Harley! how ardent is her friendſhip; ſhe repines at the preference

preference you give your inanimate favorites to her ſociety.

Mr. Montford, leſs delicate, and more ſevere, charges you with indolence of habit, and ſtupidity of ideas; he is grieved, and angry with himſelf, for being ſo; but neither Caroline's tenderneſs, nor Mr. Montford's diſpleaſure, comprehend half the misfortunes I foreſee, from the inactivity of ſuch a mind as yours.

As neceſſity is the mother of invention, ſo is idleneſs the foundreſs of evil.

If you were a ſportſman, your little fortune, would not only afford you the full enjoyment of your favorite amuſement, but your extreme ſenſibility, would, like a large head of water, by being diverted into different channels, loſe the power to overwhelm you with its force: and the exerciſe of the chace, would alſo contribute to the health of your body.

If the convivial circle could allure you from your ſequeſtered haunts, it would be a pleaſure to reflect that you enjoyed the ſociety you liked, with more gout from your occaſional retreats.

Were you a libertine, an epicure, or even a miſer; ſtill your mind having an object in purſuit, would be in leſs danger, than now: a young man filled with the pureſt milk of human kindneſs, the abſolute ſon of ſenſibility, living in a ſtate of apathy, retiring to ſolitude, ſhunning ſociety, preferring the bluſhing ſweets of a new blown roſe, to the human face divine, and paying greater attention to the cultivation of his garden than to the ſoul of man; oh Harley! it cannot laſt—you know not the precipice on which you ſtand.

Your boſom glows with benevolence, you diffuſe happineſs, and diſtribute charity; the children

dren of poverty hail you as their patron; and the victims of ſorrow raiſe their feeble voice in prayers for their benefactor: you are bounteous to your labourers, and ſtudious to reward the induſtrious; you are, in ſhort, a young uncle Toby; "for every man's misfortune you have a tear, "for every man's need, a ſhilling;" you look inward, where imagination is ever pleaſed; and backward, where conſcience is ever ſtill; and this, you fancy, is the ſum of earthly good: you dream not of the ties, which are actually neceſſary to your exiſtence: No; you are the Adam, for whom the Creator never deſigned an Eve: you are out of the reach of paſſion; a ſtoic, a philoſopher, a Diogenes, at twenty-two; what a reverſe awaits you!

Your ſoul, Edward, is formed for tender connections; you have yet only *ſeen*, not *felt* beauty; the charming ruſtics of your village can only attract the eyes, and yours are in ſubjection to your mind; you are therefore invulnerable to them; but there are a ſort of women who are not ſo eaſily repulſed; whoſe looks, voice, and manners, ſteal into the ſoul, with ſuch a welcome, ſuch imperceptible craft, and ſo firmly fix themſelves there, that nothing but annihilation can effect their removal.

The firſt female of this deſcription you meet, who either is, or has art to perſuade *you* ſhe is, as ſenſible and as extravagant as yourſelf, will be your fate; and if ſo, you are undone.

Your little fortune is inſufficient, (without ſome exertions of your own) to ſupport a family with comfort to yourſelf:—obſerve, I have not ſuppoſed the female, whoſe chains you are to wear, will be a girl of fortune; that I conceive to be morally

morally impoſſible; becauſe ſuch a one will be taught higher maxims than thoſe that will be congenial to your humble ones; and our women of fortune, from the ten pounds to ten thouſand, are early taught, the only juſt equivalent, is metal for metal; they have too high a ſenſe of their own importance to pay any regard to the particular diſpoſition of their huſbands; *they* will not therefore, *really think* like you; and will not be at the trouble of affecting to do ſo.

You are, if you marry a portionleſs wife, however amiable ſhe may be, ſure of encountering diſtreſs.

If you have reſolution to give up the woman of your heart, rather than involve her in your difficulties, you certainly ſave yourſelf a world of one ſort of trouble; but how will you contrive to free your mind from the thouſand fond regrets which will fill it with the image of her you love? how bitter will be the recollection, that in rejecting the offers of your friends, you have alſo rejected the woman you adore; that in condemning *yourſelf* to a life of joyleſs celebacy, you deprive *her* of every hope of happineſs; and either be the cauſe of her giving her hand to a man, who has no ſhare in her heart; or perhaps, conſign her, the victim of ſecret ſorrow, to an early grave.—

Well, is the matter ſettled? you will be a batchelor: look forward to the period of human miſery; when the natural infirmities of age, are painful to the moſt happy, and moſt contented: when the ſad hours creep on, ſlow, yet rapid: when every paſſing moment is followed by a groan of anguiſh, and a ſigh of regret; when your life will be burthenſome to yourſelf, unintereſting

reſting to the world, and unuſeful to ſociety.

While the warm animated circulation of youthful blood, keeps it wonted current in your veins, and glows on your cheek; while you have health to take brown exerciſe, and create appetite; while the hilarity of your ſpirits, gives ſtrength to your limbs, while you dare riſk the mid-day heat, when the dog ſtar reigns; the diſappointment of your hopes, will be attended with a kind of melting, and not unpleaſing woe; *that* have I borne, and *this* I do ſuffer, you will ſay, rather than make her wretched; you will feel the impoſſibility of happineſs without her, you will reſign yourſelf to ſorrow, you will find a luxury in ſighing, and there are certain ſenſations of pleaſure even in the tears of genuine paſſion.

But time, pain, weakneſs, imbecility, and your own ſolitary fire ſide; will remind you of many abſentees, neceſſary to gild the going down of life.

The frigid how-dy'e of acquaintances, the lukewarm concern of friends, the important viſits of diſtant relations, couſins of your laſt will and teſtament, the neglect of ſervants, the hard hand of a mercenary nurſe, which opens with a thouſand times more alacrity to graſp your gold, than gentleneſs, to wrap the flannels round your gouty legs; who ſees with extreme fortitude, the near approach of your diſſolution: but whoſe apprehenſions are really ſerious, leſt any of the perquiſites of her office ſhould eſcape her, at the moment ſhe anticipates your laſt groan: theſe will all ſpeak to your feelings, in a language, pain, and petulance, will teach you to underſtand.

Do you like this portrait? or ſhall we reverſe it? You marry the woman you love, you have a family—worſe, infinitely worſe.

Behold

Behold the wife of your choice; her, whoſe eye could glance you into rapture; ſee, it is humid, ſunk, and all its luſtre loſt in care; her ſilent ſufferings call on every faculty of your ſoul, for tenderneſs, for relief, for indulgence; your purſe is too light to afford either; you are wounded by her fatigue, you feel her groans, and your agonies increaſe, with the impoſſibility of alleviating her anguiſh, or of concealing your own.

Your girls, are all that beauty, and good ſenſe, aided by the faultleſs example of their mother, can make them; but ſee, they retire to weep, their white boſoms heave with ſorrow, and indignation: their homely, ill-bred neighbours, deſpiſe, and inſult them; you fire at the affront, alas! your reſentment is derided—your rage is impotent; *they are richer than you, their daughters have wealth, yours have only merit.*

Your ſons are learned, ſenſible, and well-bred; but, they are nevertheleſs, doomed to encounter the proud man's ſcorn; they have to roll their ſtone up the ſteep hill; if they fail, it is not them, it is their father.

I have wrote ſo much, and my mind is ſo engroſſed, by the ſubject of my letter; that I, at this moment, actually fancy I ſee you ſurrounded by a group of amiable children, circumſtanced as I have deſcribed them; and am too much affected to proceed: deareſt Edward, we join our prayers, our entreaties, be perſuaded, come to us, make us happy.

JAMES,
CAROLINE BUTLER.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

Edward Harley, Eſq. to James Butler, Eſq.

Hermitage.

I Received your letter, my dear brother, with gratitude, and affection; and allow me to ſay, if not convinced by your argument, I am at leaſt charmed with your eloquence.

I did not immediately anſwer it. I have been trying to new mould my diſpoſition, and perſuade myſelf to conſent with grace, to the requiſitions of my friends.

I have looked round my little boundary, and repeated your arguments to its harmleſs inmates; I have told the venerable oaks, the ſpreading palm, and the tall poplar, which have ſo long afforded me a moſt acceptable ſhelter from the mid-day ſun, that though I am ſtill ſenſible of their refreſhing bounty, I am on the point of accounting them, totally uſeleſs and invaluable.

I am writing now on the verdant bank of the clear ſtream, where Caroline went through Taſſo with me, undiſturbed by aught but the murmurs of a paſſing current, which ſupplies my table with fiſh, and from whence I quaff draughts of real nectar; I have conſidered, and reconſidered, how to be *wiſe*, and forſake the calm ſeat of ſober contemplation.

I have put by my brown cruſt in great ſcorn, at the idea of feaſting, moſt voluptuouſly, on your

your adulterated white; but it will not do, my ſoul involuntarily ſhrinks from the offered kindneſs of my prudent friends, while I feel their ſolicitude for my welfare, with gratitude unalterable.

But ſimply to ſay, I cannot be a man of the world, is not enough; the generous pains you have taken to convince me, I ſuffer in the opinion of judicious people, who accuſe me of an obſtinate adherence to error, or an unpardonable mutability, which prevents my fixing on any plan, merely from the variety your indulgence offers to my choice; calls for an explanation, and defence, of the motives which induce me to reject the advantages which appear to you, of ſo much importance.

General Moncraſs, unſolicited by me, has procured a commiſſion in the army, for a mortal, who treads with caution the winding paths of his little wood, leſt by an unwary ſtep, he ſhould put to death, any of the unoffending part of the Creation; he ſelects for the deſtruction of the human race, a man who ſhudders at the neceſſity of deſtroying the moſt inſignificant reptile, becauſe his heart bids him reflect on the importance of that act, which tears the firſt gift of God, from its moſt humble profeſſor.

The General thus appoints the ſon of peace to the avocation of war; he puts the ſword into a hand, that trembles at ſight of human blood.

War is, according to the general ſyſtem of politics laudable, and it may be ſometimes neceſſary; it is juſtified by examples innumerable, both in divine, and moral hiſtory, its ſacred fire has animated heroes, whoſe fame, deluges of human blood,

blood, have rendered immortal; it has confeſſedly puniſhed tyranny, and torn the uſurper from the throne of the Lord's anointed; but, it has alſo widowed the ſorrowing matron, and for ever divided the diſtracted mother from her bleeding infant; it has left the daughters of chaſtity unprotected—in the hands of brutal violence; it has alienated right, it has ſanctified wrong; but it has not power to make a ſoldier of Edward Harley:—yet I will thank the General for his well-meant kindneſs,—I ſay, well-meant, becauſe it ſtrikes me, he intended a compliment to Lady Mary; I know of no other inducement he has to ſerve *me*; he has been two months at Belle-Vue, and I have not even bowed to his Agnes; an omiſſion I am aſtoniſhed he can pardon.

Admiral Mizen, is Mr. Montford's friend on the old ſcore of election intereſt, and he offers that to a man who has a borough to ſell, or give away, as ſhall beſt ſuit the intereſt of both parties, which he would refuſe to a wounded veteran.

There was a time, when the honor of bearing a commiſſion in the Britiſh navy, might excuſe the young mind, for thirſting after the bloody banner of war: our Admirals were really brave, and they were conſequently humane; they received their commiſſions as the higheſt diſtinction in the gift of an Engliſh prince; conſidering themſelves, as entruſted with the bulwark of their country,—they were emulous to approve themſelves equal to the confidence repoſed in them: the national glory, and the people's ſafety, were depoſits equally ſacred and important. From the moment they entered their wooden worlds, they felt no animoſity incompatible with their duty;

duty; whatever were the politics of the miniſters, *they* remembered it was *their* unequivocal duty, to honor their king, and humble his enemies; to defend the dear bought rights of a free people, to preſerve untarniſhed the glory of the Britiſh flag, and ſuffer no ſtain to reſt on their own honor.

When our Admirals are of this deſcription victory follows our fleets; and an Engliſh ſeaman is a reſpectable being, where-ever he ſets his foot; but were I inclined to enter the honorable corps of naval heroes, I am too far advanced in life to think of troubling Admiral Mizen.

The law is a reſpectable profeſſion; many of the firſt geniuſes of the age give to, and receive honor from it; but none of the evils you ſo pathetically deſcribe, would be prevented by my attainments in the law: you, my dear Butler, are one of its ornaments; your heart is as uncorrupted, as your head is clear; ſuch a man as you, in the practice of the law is a general good; but it is, nevertheleſs, the bane, as well as bleſſing of ſociety; far from the humbler roof, and humbler heart of Edward Harley, be the advantages and tumults reſulting from law.

Forgive, my ſweet friend, dear Caroline, forgive him, who would ſacrifice his exiſtence in your ſervice; neither can he prevail on himſelf, to mount the ſacred eminence, to ſtand between the Almighty, and his people, to preach virtues, he has not reſolution to practiſe, to pocket the tenths of the poor, for the glory of God, to fence his own poſterity from inconvenience, by the legal rapacity of power; can your adopted brother, him whoſe young idea was taught to ſhoot with yours, can he do this?

Have

Have I talents, capacity, or inclination for trade? my more than brother, friend of my youth; ſuffer me here to breathe the ſweets of content, peace, and benevolence; if I know ſo little, and you ſo much of my heart, if it is really deſtined to be the prey of paſſion, this much, at leaſt, I may ſay, I will ſuffer alone; no hapleſs female ſhall be involved in my misfortunes; but why ſhould I encounter real dangers, from ideal fears? life now glides on like a ſmooth, unruffled current; winds may ariſe, black tempeſts darken the horizon, thunder may appal, and lightnings blaſt me, but, ſhall I, becauſe ſuch things may be, quit the ſoft boſom of ſerenity, *now*, while the bright ſun is in its meridian, and I am lifted out of the ken of mortal fear, by the refulgence of his ſplendor: you muſt be here, you muſt not only ſee, you muſt feel like me, to know all my pleaſures, to allow full weight to my argument.

Do not fancy I am ſuch an enthuſiaſt, as to imagine, I am either in my own practice, or that of my rural neighbours, infallible; no, I know that among all mankind, there is a general mixture of good and evil; the difference is this; in the great world, they are ſo unpropitiouſly blended, the luſtre of the former is nearly loſt, in the more extenſive influence of the latter; ſo that the evil appears by far the moſt predominate.

But the caſe is reverſed with us in the little world; we are aſhamed of an immoral act, it is not as with you, loſt in the monſtrous maſs of common events, we hear of it, from ſun riſe to the ſetting of that glorious orb, it purſues us to our inmoſt receſſes, and it is carefully remembered, for the purpoſe of calling a bluſh into the cheeks of our poſterity;

poſterity; a matter ſo vexatious in the conſequence, becomes diſguſtful in the act; illiterate people have more cunning (a quality which ſerves them inſtead of wiſdom) than thoſe of cultivated talents would imagine; except, like me, they ſtudied ſimple nature; they have too much ſaving knowledge, to barter an age of diſgrace, for a moment's pleaſure; but no ſtate is free from error; all that ſhort-ſighted mortals can do, is to chuſe that, which appears, leaſt likely to deſtroy the ſeeds of honeſt rectitude, which God has implanted in all his Creatures: I am convinced my tower of ſtrength is at the hermitage; let it, my dear Caroline, be ſoon honored by your preſence; it will then be elyſium to your

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

Major Melroſe to General Moncraſs.

London.

POH, poh, my dear General, what ſignifies mincing the matter; it is as plain to me as the noſe in my face: and that you will allow needs no elucidation, that a pair of ſparkling eyes, ſhining over two cherry cheeks, aquiline noſe, ruby lips, and ſmall white teeth, have taken the fortreſs of your heart, drove out the lawful commander, and put near twenty years conſtancy to actual rout.—I hate myſteries; if there any miſchiefs concealed under them, why the ſooner 'tis out the better; if there are not, let me tell you, General, they are very fooliſh; what the deuce is this girl with her foreign name to you? I am ſat down to write in a very ill humour, I forewarn you of that—juſt come from Bath, where you have left impreſſions which will certainly ſend your honor to the d—l, if thoſe ſame myſteries turn out as I expect they will: by the bye, I do not at all comprehend a ſyſtem of benevolence that demands ſo great a ſacrifice; I would with pleaſure give a few hundreds myſelf, nay I would not flinch if it were a thouſand or two, to relieve an innocent, beautiful object of diſtreſs. Mind I ſtipulate on beauty, the face of an ugly woman is, I own, with me a terrible damper of charity, a broad, pock-marked countenance now, for inſtance, with a copper coloured

loured neck, and a pair of red fiſts, if your Agnes anſwered that deſcription, confeſs, would her intereſt have been half ſo ſtrong;—but if ſhe were an angel, I have no ſort of conception why my own peace, and that of thoſe deſervedly dear to me, ſhould be totally diſregarded, for the ſake of mitigating the misfortunes of others; nor can I penetrate the depth of that myſtery, which portends greater diſtreſs to Lady Mary, than the alienation of her huſband's affections, I ſay alienation, for if the intereſt and fortune of your protegéé, be of more importance to you, than the peace of your wife, that is the caſe, gloſs it over how you will;—to be ſure, Lady Mary is ſome ſeven or eight and thirty. The beautiful Agnes has not numbered much above half thoſe years—ergo—a chryſtal tear, ſqueezed out of the corner of her black eye, ſpeaks cloſer to the heart than all the matronly wailings of her ladyſhip.

As I was at Bath, and the officious public had announced me, I thought I could not conſiſtent with common civility, and good manners, avoid making my bow in the Creſcent; although, upon my ſoul, I was, ſo much, I was going to ſay, aſhamed of you, General, that I did not wiſh to be let in; contrary however to my expectation, the porter told me my name was excepted in the general order to admit none but the phyſical tribe: ſo you ſee they had heard I was at Bath, and expected me to call.—Well—up I marched, as ſlow, and cautious, as if a mine had been ready to ſpring under my feet, until the drawing room door was thrown open.—

And now for the Dramatis Perſonæ:

On one ſide of the fire (the room was as hot as an oven,) ſat Lord Ruthven, the leg, and arm which had been affected with the paralytic ſtroke,

ſupported on cuſhions; his thick black brows drawn into a parallel line with his prominent noſe, his mouth ſo entirely loſt, between that leading feature, and his chin, that had it not been for a hollow grumbling ſound, which dinned the ear with your name, and late exploits, it would have puzzled an anatomiſt to have diſcovered he had one: Lady Mary, whoſe nervous head-achs (as ſhe afterwards informed me) affected her eyes; (they were indeed *viſibly affected*) was ſeated oppoſite her father; the curtains of the windows, except one where pretty Julia ſat drawing, all let down: her ladyſhip amuſing herſelf with that delightful exerciſe, vulgarly ycleped "beating the devils tattoo."

Julia laid down her pencil, as ſoon as I entered, and took her ſtation at the back of her mother's chair:—Hem—hem—how long I had been at Bath, the weather, the no company, and politics, were all attempted by way of introducing converſation, but after a monoſyllable or two, the effort was given up.

At laſt—I made a bold puſh, and enquired for you: do you mean to inſult us, Major Melroſe? bellowed the old peer kicking with his well leg the cuſhion from his lame one, which Miſs Neville flew to replace; inſult you my Lord returned I with an affected ſurpriſe, which I meant ſhould appear very natural, but believe I failed in the attempt; I really do not comprehend—uproſe your divine rib, and with a majeſtic toſs of her head, would have commanded Julia to follow her out of the room.

You know my weak ſide, General, I hate to be left by the women, there is certainly ſomething very enlivening in the pretty ſhrill ſound of their voices; dear Lady Mary, ſaid I, taking her hand with

with unfeigned reſpect; what direful offence have I committed; there *was* a time when the name of Moncraſs was a paſſport to your favor; what can have happened in ſo ſhort a period to occaſion ſuch a change?

Bating her pride, Lady Mary is, and bating her *age too*, the fineſt woman in England; her features glowed with indignation, ſhe grew an inch taller—

Major Melroſe, this treatment is unworthy your character and ſentiments.

In what reſpect, Madam?

Let go my hand, ſir—if you really are ignorant of our ſituation, permit me to leave you; my father will explain to you; what it is death to me to think of: but if, as I ſuſpect you are not, let me tell you, ſir, this triumph over domeſtic miſery, is a very poor one; and ſhe burſt into tears.—

There was no ſtanding this, I was blown to the devil, General; I am always wrong when I attempt any thing in the round about way; my forte is plain, unvarniſhed truth, ſo having faltered, and equivocated, until I was aſhamed of myſelf: I fairly owned I *was* in the ſecret, and offered to confeſs all, on condition her ladyſhip would be re-ſeated; ſhe very majeſtically performed her part of the treaty, and I as punctually fulfilled mine; ſo that if your worſhip had been tempted, as moſt of us young old fellows are, when a girl is in the caſe, to gloſs over any of your manoeuvres you would have been blown; but to do you juſtice, their account exactly tallied with yours.

An aggravation of your ſins—yes! faith, we have heard of the arrival of your damoſelle, and her gouvernante, at Belle Vue, with all the editions, and additions, impertinent curioſity, and double tongued ſlander could invent.

The Earl was quite vociferous, Lady Mary ſtruggled hard to conceal her tears, ſhe was entirely en diſhabille, a white wrapper careleſsly thrown round her—her hair undreſſed, and ſuch a total abſtractedneſs in her whole figure, from any concern in this wicked world, that I could not help conſidering her as a fine *ruin*, on the point of falling into nothing; I felt myſelf ſtrangely affected, and ventured to aſk whether matters had not been carried on with too great violence?

Oh Major, anſwered ſhe! (then giving way to her tears) if we grant they have, has it not been the violence of fond affection! I now appear to the world, and I doubt not to yourſelf, as an enraged jealous woman—I cannot deny the juſtice of the cenſure; thoſe who remember me in the days of Mr. Neville, are aſtoniſhed at ſuch a reverſe of character: had I regarded General Moncraſs, as I did Neville—he too might have had his pleaſures, without being troubled with my enquiries; it is the misfortune of my nature, that I cannot eaſily overcome prejudices I once imbibe—my fond imagination had decked Moncraſs in all the virtues that could adorn a faultleſs being—and then the conſciouſneſs of my own unbounded love—

Talk of him no more, daughter (interrupted the Earl) ungrateful—worthleſs—unprincipled.—

Stay, my lord, cried I, interrupting him in my turn—remember—the man you are branding with thoſe diſhonourable epithets, is *my friend.*

That is not to your credit, Major, anſwered he, with quickneſs.

I aroſe.

The Major, my lord, ſaid Lady Mary, is a friend to us all—he is a man of the world,— a man

man of gallantry—he cannot feel as we do on this occaſion—allowance muſt be made for the privilege of cuſtom, and the prejudices of education.

Dear mamma, ſaid Julia, (I ſhall adore that girl) and why is General Moncraſs to be deprived of the indulgences you are ſo willing to grant Major Melroſe? how often have you ſaid, there is no ſuch thing as a perfect character?

Forbear, Julia, ſaid Lady Mary with a ſevere look; you feel much for the General, and more for Reuben—how is it that your mother ſhares ſo little in your ſolicitude?

Becauſe, ſaid Julia, my mother will, "right or wrong," be in a paſſion, and puniſh the innocent with the guilty;—now only think, Major, what cruelty; here is poor Reuben Moncraſs, for no earthly reaſon in the world, that I know of, involved in his father's diſgrace; when, you know, if the General is guilty, which perhaps he may be, and perhaps not, Reuben would, in the end, be the ſufferer; ſince to be ſure, it muſt be a very uncommon attachment, that could have ſuch influence over his father's conduct.

How often, Miſs Julia Neville, have your Mother, and myſelf, both forbid your naming that young fellow?

True, my Lord; and I have bit my tongue an hundred times in trying to obey you; but, I aſſure you, when I am forbid to *talk* of him, I pay it off with thinking; ſo it is pretty much the ſame.—

Julia Neville, ſaid Lady Mary, knitting her brows.

I cannot help it, Madam, if I were to be killed.

You will have more prudence, Julia, when you are Lady Morden.—

Lady Morden! exclaimed I, in ſurpriſe.

Yes, Sir, ſaid the ſaucy prattler; you know his Lordſhip, I preſume—but perhaps you do not know he condeſcends to drop his own ancient title, and is willing to take *our's*, with all incumbrances, not excepting *myſelf*;—Major, reſuming her pencil, do you like my grandfather's choice of a huſband for me?

Do you, Miſs Neville?—

Oh no! I am determined not to accept it.—

And pray why ſo, Madam? ſaid the Earl, almoſt choaked with paſſion—

Becauſe—becauſe, glancing an earneſt look at her mother, I do not think it is fortunate.

Julia, ſaid Lady Mary, you know how much you diſpleaſe me by talking in this manner to your venerable grand-father: *you* ought to be the laſt perſon to throw out a reflection that aludes to your own father.

Not when I am the principal ſufferer.

You a ſufferer,—why pray, Miſs, what do you ſuffer? ſaid the Earl.

A great deal, my Lord: I am deprived of the only ſociety I deſire on earth, and bored to death with the love, and adoration of a man, who regards me as much as I do him, which is little enough;—and in ſhort, my Lord, if you teize me about Lord Morden, I will actually run away to Reuben, if he will receive me.

Oh—no doubt of that I dare ſay, Miſs, he is too well inſtructed to refuſe you, while he thinks your father's fortune, and my eſtate, will follow your ridiculous choice;—but you are a ward of chancery, and if he dares receive you—there are laws:—

And,

And, ſaid Lady Mary, gravely, if Reuben Moncraſs is your choice—a mother's bleſſing ſhall be ever withheld from you; but I wonder how you have the confidence to talk in this manner before Major Melroſe; except, indeed, you mean it as an indirect meſſage to the ſon of *him* who has *injured me.*

I am extremely concerned, Lady Mary, (ſaid I very ſeriouſly) that I am ſo unfortunate as to ſtand ſo very low in your Ladyſhip's opinion:—

Forgive me, Major; a wounded ſpirit is very hard to bear; and to have my own, and *only* child, one from whom I have every right to expect conſolation, league with my enemies, is enough to turn my brain.

Julia aroſe, and with more gravity than I thought ſhe could aſſume—Major, ſaid ſhe, I am grieved to have drawn, by my volubility, ſuch a cenſure on you; and believe me, my dear mamma, (kiſſing her hand) and *you*, my honored grandfather, if I did not feel I was right, I could not be ſo pert. General Moncraſs is not my mamma's enemy; I am ſure he adores her; and I have a preſentiment *all* will be right yet; but in the mean time, here you drive on, and in *revenge* to him, I muſt be made the ſacrifice; don't you talk of Lord Morden, and I will not ſay any thing of Reuben; I know I want four years of being of age, and to tell you the truth it is well I do—for the forbidding me to ſee Reuben, makes me ſo weary of every thing elſe, that I ſometimes think a bold ſtroke in ſome of us, would ſet *all* right.

I was much hurt at Lady Mary's hint; and could not immediately reconcile myſelf to the mean ſuſpicion it implied; however, on recollect-

ing that anger has ſome privileges, and grief more, I ſuffered it to paſs—and reſumed the converſation, from the part of Miſs Neville's ſpeech, that alluded to you.

I begged to be conſidered, as Lady Mary had truly repreſented me, the general friend of the family; and added, I was ſure matters muſt have been aggravated, or miſrepreſented; I would venture to ſtake my honor, and every thing dear to me, as a man, and a ſoldier, on the affection of my friend for his amiable, and accompliſhed wife; and faith, General, I found myſelf in a vein to be very eloquent, had my cleverneſs been encouraged; but the Earl cut me ſhort, by aſking me whether you had requeſted, or knew of my interference?

I anſwered him, you did not:

Let me aſk you, Major, ſaid your Lady—do you not know—he has a woman—*the very woman* in keeping at his houſe?—

I was ſilent.

You *do* not anſwer me—you cannot.

Pardon me, madam; I have heard from the General himſelf, he has a young lady under his protection; but he aſſures me ſhe is a woman of honor—

Ah, Major, what then are the ties which bind him to her? or why are thoſe kept ſecret from *me?* If my *peace* is concerned, if his reſerve, (no matter how laudable his motives) deſtroys my quiet, can any thing excuſe it? I will ſuppoſe this girl to be his natural daughter, or ſome near relation; have I evinced ſo contracted a mind? is my heart ſo narrow, that it will allow no room for a perſon juſtifiably dear to my huſband? Oh, Major, the very ſuppoſition is an injury; then ſo circumſtanced, I appeal to the generoſity of your

own

own heart, whether my demands are not reaſonable? I only aſk to have the woman given up, to be provided for by *me*—and to be made acquainted with the nature of his connection with her.

We men, madam, do not, perhaps, in all points, judge exactly like the ladies; there may be ſomething in giving up, and telling tales, not perhaps conſiſtent with our *notions* of *honor*.

Nothing leſs, by G—d, interrupted the Earl, ſhall be accepted.——

What, not if he reſigns the lady to her own connections, and engages to give her entirely up, never to ſee her more?—

Oh you divine man, cried Julia, running up to me, and I verily believe the little witch would have kiſſed me had I encouraged the motion; but I am too modeſt, General; I only took her hand, and with a countenance that did not ſpeak my feelings if it was not full of earneſt anxiety, repeated the propoſition.

And what ſecurity will General Moncraſs give, ſaid the Earl, ironically, that he will not again part with his wife for this pretty bauble?

I was again hurt—I aroſe and took my hat.

Lady Moncraſs alſo aroſe—you are not, Major, you ſay, authorized to make any propoſal on the part of General Moncraſs?

No, madam; but my regard for my friend, and my reſpect for your ladyſhip, would carry me great lengths; I am not even ſure I could prevail on the General to—

Enough, ſir, enough—interrupted ſhe with reſentment, her face in a glow, and curtſying as ſhe retreated to her chair.

Miſs Neville gave me her hand; God bleſs you, Major, ſaid ſhe; I ſuppoſe we ſee *you* no

more; every thing worth living for is baniſhed this houſe. The Earl began to rebuke the open-hearted girl, and I heard them at high words as I deſcended the ſtairs.

Now, as I ſaid before, the retroſpect of this viſit leaves me in a very ill humour; the old Earl is an oddity, but he is a man of ſtrict honor; has lived to a good old age, wrapped up in this his darling daughter; and therefore muſt feel her diſtreſs; and faith 'tis a pity the old Grecian, one half gone as he is by diſeaſe, ſhould not carry the other half whole to his grave: then Lady Mary actually is one of the *beſt* as well as one of the fineſt women in England of her years; few women in any age, or country, ever gave ſuch proofs of affection, as ſhe has done for you; and it is plaguy hard to diſmount her off a hobby-horſe, which has coſt her ſo dear; at a period of life too, when civility to a fine woman, is the more acceptable; as ſhe knows, if ſhe has any ſenſe at all; ſhe is daily decreaſing in the attractions that with our wicked ſex tell to more account, than either goodneſs, or virtue: as to Julia, her mother's authority is ſo weakened by this diviſion in the family, there is not the remoteſt hope ſhe will ever return to that implicit and reſpectful obedience, which was once ſo amiable in her: ſo here is the peace, and perhaps future weal of one of the firſt families in the kingdom, deſtroyed; for God knows who, from God knows where, and nobody knows for what. Do, my dear General, act a little like other men; marry the girl to your Chaplain, and go back to your wife.

I called in Soho yeſterday morning, expecting to meet your philoſopher at Butler's; but found to my ſurprize, the commiſſion lay dormant; Mrs.

Mrs. J. Butler, (I did not ſee the old dowager) bluſhed and ſtammered an excuſe for her brother, as ſhe called him, the meaning of which I take it is, the fellow is a milkſop and won't fight; ſo I think the wiſeſt ſtep you can take, is to get him into orders, and make a match between him and your Agnes.

The reviews will continue all the ſummer, ſo that except you come to London, I ſhall not ſee you until I make war on the partridges, in the neighbourhood of Belle-Vue.

Adieu, dear General; I would give half my fortune you were quietly ſettled with old ſour crout, and Lady Mary in the Creſcent.

MELROSE.

LETTER

LETTER X.

Edward Harley, Eſq. to Mrs. Caroline Butler.

Hermitage.

WHY do you not let me hear from you, my dear friend? have I been ſo unhappy as to offend you mortally? you ſenſibly afflict me, by depriving me of your correſpondence; is the deſire of living to myſelf, and to you only, an unpardonable offence; I know, and feel the goodneſs of your intention; you would have me happy, your way. I am obſtinate, and chuſe to be ſo my own; the end in view is preciſely the ſame, we only differ in the means to attain it; you think your's are the moſt infallible, but if I am content, *that* is happineſs to *me*; can I be better than well?

Were you witneſs to the ſerenity in which my moments paſs,—the exultation I feel, when from my little ſtore, I ſupply the neceſſaries of life to the honeſt labourers, who, by affliction, or ſickneſs, are rendered incapable of earning them; when I confer a favor, which diſpels the ſtarting tear, and, when at the cloſe of the day, I reflect, though my power is limited, I have not ſuffered one call on benevolence and humanity to paſs unregarded; you might ſmile at my ſimplicity, but could not condemn it; let me deſcribe to you my ſituation at this moment.

I am

I am ſeated in my wind chair, betwixt the two large elms on the brow of the hill; a glance only of the Hermitage is viſible, through the foliage of the avenue; our grove, Caroline, is in ſuch beautiful perfection, that the luxuriant arrangement of the trees, although they are the ſpontaneous growth of all bountiful nature, appears to be the work of a ſkilful artiſt; the river which is hid by the woods, until it has paſſed by them, ſeems to break out under the hill, and gradually expands into grandeur, and beauty, as it majeſtically advances, enriching the neighbouring meadows, until one part of its divided current, makes a welcome way through the valley below, while the other laves the delicious banks of Belle-Vue park and gardens, which hang directly over it, and onward continue to diverſify the charming picture before me, until loſt between the two high hills, which bound the enchanting proſpect: the ſides of the rich vale are covered with cattle, grain, and forage; the trees ſeem to aſſign a proud boundary to the different farms; the quickſet hedges are in their gayeſt livery, and their feathered inhabitants are ſtraining their little throats in the moſt harmonious concerts.

Nearer home, on my own demeſne, this view, delightful as it is, is eclipſed, both in beauty and utility: four honeſt men, three women, and about a dozen children, who are all fed from my little ſtock, are ſitting on the graſs; happy by my means, and content with my bounty; the men are my conſtant labourers, and it often happens, as in the preſent inſtance; I am told, what a main deal of good help the women are at a pinch!

My rich neighbour, Mr. Thrift, complains much of my ſimple diſpoſition, and thus he argues;

gues; you give way to thoſe wretches, they prey on your eaſy temper, you keep up the price of labour, and are continually impoſed on; if I had your land, I would make double the money of it.

Double the money! what ſhould I do with it? as we walk to the field, the ſtory goes on, the ſong is concluded; they are, however, not ſo eaſy at ſight of my companion; they riſe with an awkward, ſtiff kind of reſpect, of which he takes no ſort of notice; the children creep off, and their mothers follow; but Mr. Thrift is no ſooner removed, than all is well again; they know my heart is among them; they apply to me on their diſputes, my important deciſion is made, from which they have no wiſh to appeal; the children hang round me, a poor palſy-headed old dame aſſures me, when ſhe is gone, my affairs will not be half ſo well managed; becauſe, if my honor remembers, ſhe always forewarned me of change of weather, whereby, thof 'ſquire Thrift would ſkin a flint ſtone, his harveſt was never half ſo well got in as mine; another old ſoul tells me marvellous things of her darlings darling; as how ſhe always prayed for me, without bidding, after grandame, and as how, if I would but aſk her, what H ſtood for, ſhe would anſwer of her own accord Harley.

Ay, ay, cries Mr. Thrift; but will all this palaver go to market; and ſo, in other words, ſay my friend, and his Caroline– but yonder comes a love lorn maiden, whoſe ſlow, unequal pace, and averted looks, ſpeak inward woe; her ſtraw hat is drawn over her eyes, and the coloured handkerchief on her neck is wet with her tears; poor girl! ſhe advances, ſlow and timid, and now her wiſtful eyes are raiſed through her tears to mine

—I cannot

—I cannot ſuffer her to feel her inferiority, grief levels all diſtinction; poor damſel! I have been imperfectly told thy ſtory, but I will hear it again from thyſelf.

* * * * * * *

A victim to the tender paſſion—I am going, Caroline, to give you a love-tale.

Patty Lucas, of the mill, the laſs; Hodge, of the green-lane, the ſwain.

Hodge kept company with Patty two years laſt lammas, and promiſed to marry none but ſhe, and broke ſix-pence, beſides ſwearing on the bible; but lammas-eve was fatal more ways than one to poor Patty; for Hodge being at a neighbouring wake, was ticed, unbeknown to Patty, to take the under-groom's place at Belle-Vue; for Hodge wanted to ſee the world.

* * * * *

Well, ſo rapid were Hodge's improvements in the world, that the ſecond viſit he paid at the mill, he had acquired knowledge enough to take advantage of the innocent creature's fondneſs; and Patty's apron-ſtrings are now an infinite deal too ſhort.

Well, child, ſaid I, and what can I do for you? I ſuppoſe you hate the fellow who has ruined you.

Oh, dear me, no ſir!—what, hate Hodge!—no; I only hate that huge white houſe, and every ſoul a'thinſide on't; an its had'nt been for the Lunnun ſarvants there, Hodge wou'd ne'r a broke

broke his promiſe ;—Oh, dear ſir, that Lunnun is a peſt'lent place ! and ſitch words as poor Hodge has larnt among 'um—dear heart, why a makes nothing of ſwearing, and telling of lies ! —Oh, if your honor would be ſo good as to ſpeak to Madam Agnes, ſhe would bag the Ganeral to bid Hodge to make me an honeſt woman, afore father and mother noed on it.

I promiſed to try my influence at Belle-Vue, and I mean to keep my word—not indeed by ſpeaking to Madam Agnes ; but I have not yet waited on the General, to thank him for the honor he conferred on me, in procuring the commiſſion; the trouble he was pleaſed to take well deſerves that compliment, and, perhaps, an apology too, for declining to accept it : I ſhall take the opportunity to mention poor Patty, and her broken ſix-pence ; I may then alſo probably ſee this Agnes—not that I have the leaſt curioſity about her ; ſhe is well ſpoken of by the few who viſit at Belle-Vue, but they are few indeed ; that delightful villa, which laſt year was the reſort of all the faſhionable people in the country, is now almoſt as great a ſolitude as my hermitage :—ſomething in that, Caroline, reſembling primitive virtue ; when the habitations of thoſe, who live in open defiance of her precepts, are thus deſerted ; the General is ſaid to be in ill health, and the Lady is very prudent, or very politic ; ſhe neither *has not*, or *affects* not to have any wiſh out of the vicinity of Belle-Vue ;—but the merits of women of her caſt are of too levelling a quality, one is rather mortified than pleaſed to hear of any particular propriety in their conduct ; it too much conciliates the extremes of good and evil.

I remember

I remember being much hurt once at Belle-Vue, when I accompanied Mrs. Montford thither: among other topics of converſation, the Duke of B--'s miſtreſs was ſpoken of as a domeſtic woman, a fond mother, a warm friend, a placable enemy, and the lady-Bountiful of his village.

A very ordinary woman, Lady C—, was preſent, who ſeldom ſaw her own children, loſt all her ready-money at play, and contracted debts with the neighbouring tradeſmen for neceſſaries; whoſe whole heart was ſo loſt in the vortex of faſhion and diſſipation, ſhe had neither time or inclination to be a friend to any human being; yet on the ſingle merit of her chaſtity, which perhaps might not in her be a *merit*, how did ſhe toſs her well-dreſſed head in ſcorn, as all the other different virtues that could adorn the female character, were aſcribed to the Duke's companion: on ſuch occaſions one feels too much for the miſtreſs, too little for the matron, and it was a ſupreme pleaſure to me that Lady Moncraſs was preſent, that I could turn my eye from the ſevere Lady C—, to her; were it not that there are *ſome* women, who are literally the jewel of their huſbands; who in theſe days of toleration would have courage to marry? and will Caroline pardon me, if I venture to give it as my opinion, that the free manners of ſome women, and the unamiable ones of others, have a baneful influence on the principles of the men; for "As men "govern Rome, ſo the women govern the Ro-"mans," and a modern author tells us, that, "If every lady were attentive to the morals of "her lover, a libertine would be an uncommon "character," this is what I call one of Colman's

beſt

beſt things; and ſhould be inſcribed, were I of conſequence to enforce a law for the ladies, over the toilet of every pretty woman in the kingdom. Adieu.

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

Mrs. Butler to Mr. Harley.

Soho-Square, London.

AND muſt I indeed, Edward, give up the ſanguine hopes my fond heart had formed, of ſeeing my beloved brother, as valuable, and reſpected in public life, as he is in private; as much honored for the amiable diſpoſition of his mind by the world, as by his Caroline; will nothing prevail on you to relinquiſh your rural attachments? ſhall I never live nearer my Edward? will two hundred miles always ſeparate us? If I muſt ſubmit to this hard fate; if I muſt give up my wiſhes, if you can indeed be no where happy but at your Hermitage, then, my dear brother, let it be on one condition.

Your laſt letter charmed us; I am impatient to hear the ſequel of Hodge and Patty's amour; your reception at the Caſtle; your opinion of the celebrated Agnes; but above all, to read from your own ingenuous account, how you employ yourſelf; and this will (my James ſays) not only bring us mentally oftener together, but agreeably fill your time—the little hurry of finiſhing by the hour of poſt, the expectation of letters, and punctual correſpondence, are, he ſays, the moſt pleaſing avocations of a country life: will you promiſe, brother, to keep a journal of your actions, and faithfully remit it to your friend and ſiſter? we will be indulgent to your faults,

ſhould

ſhould we perceive any; and do full honor to the virtues we know you poſſeſs: you will have the advantage of remarks, and advice, from cooler heads, if not wiſer ones than your own; as the perſon immediately under the impreſſion of paſſing events, or the dominion of paſſion, cannot ſo well judge of the *proper*, as thoſe who ſee them only on paper: my heart is ſet on this matter; you will not have the cruelty to diſappoint your friends in every requeſt they make; we will conſider your two laſt letters as a beginning, and arrange them accordingly; and who knows but ſome time hence we may publiſh your letters under the title of the "Young Hermit;" or, if all the diſmals of Mr. Butler's prognoſtics, from your falling in love, come to paſs, perhaps the "Engliſh Werter," though heaven forbid you ſhould reſemble the German in fate; I know not how I came to fix on that Novel, it is my averſion—it is like Rouſſeau's Eloiſa, a very bad ſtory—divinely told—ſo far indeed, if my brother is the relator, his hiſtory will be ſure to reſemble the German Novel.

Adieu, my dear brother, I am out of patience; no travelling one while for

CAROLINE BUTLER.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

Edward Harley, Eſq. to Mrs. Butler.

Hermitage.

WHAT can I refuſe to the requeſt of my ſweet ſiſter? is there a thought in my heart I would conceal from her, or a wiſh her pure mind may not inſpect? yes, Caroline, you ſhall know more than my actions, their motives ſhall alſo be laid before you; yet when that is done, what amuſement will the events of a life, you ſtyle tame and inſipid, afford you?

You will expect adventure.

I ſhall have none to relate;

For when I have told you I am up with the lark, watch the riſing of the glorious ſun, ſaunter by my quickſet hedges, give and receive the good-morrow of the cottagers, chat with old Rawlinſon about things which happened ſixty years ago, who never fails to marvel the Rector will not leave his bed earlier, becauſe that exerciſe is better than phyſic; here Benſon's dreams while ſhe makes tea, which are ever full of wonderful omens concerning her dear young lady; out when the morning repaſt is ended, round my farm, hear the news of the day from the labourers, with their comments thereon; it is true, the plough, or the ſpade, ſtand ſtill the while, but they are chearfully reſumed as I leave them, with a God bleſs our maſter; perhaps

perhaps I invite company home to dinner, you, Caroline, would not chuſe ſhould ſpoil your carpet; then read, or take my violoncello until the cool of the evening, when I walk to the green, and join the rural amuſements there; I ſay, Caroline, when I have told you this, with the very trifling variations, occaſioned by alteration of weather, or paying an important viſit at the parſonage, I have given you a diary of my life; and theſe, with a few ruſtic anecdotes, will form the whole ſubſtance of the correſpondence you ſo warmly deſire: but, as

"Friendſhip gilds every object on which ſhe ſhines," and as you, in the centre of gaiety, and entertainment, condeſcend to accept my humble tribute of affection, I chearfully obey your commands.

The amour of Hodge and Patty, are exactly in the ſame ſituation as when I wrote laſt; except that Patty has been ſo unfortunate as to attract the notice of Mrs. Swamp, whoſe natural averſion to handſome huſſies, is greatly increaſed by ſome propenſities to gallantry, which, it is whiſpered, ſhe diſcovered in the Rector, during his late excurſion to Bath.

Mrs. Swamp no ſooner caſt her malignant eyes on the damſel's waiſt, than ſhe recollected the Miller's wife was lame, and that it would be a charitable act in her, to look in on the poor woman; now, though dame Lucas had really been an invalid almoſt a year, Mrs. Swamp's charity had lain dormant, until her reſolution to direct her mother's tearful eye to the ſame improving object, which had attracted her own, carried her to the mill.

The

The poor dame communicated the matter to her huſband—Patty was immediately called to trial—pleaded guilty—and ſuffered the torture of Mrs. Swamp's invectives, her father's anger, and her mother's tears——

The outcry raiſed in the village by the virtuous Mrs Swamp, and the enquiries thereon from the overſeers, have ſo much affected both the miller's wife and daughter, that they are as unable from indiſpoſition, as from ſhame, to be ſeen abroad; and I am not in credit with myſelf for poſtponing my application at Belle-Vue, in the girl's favor; I am therefore going there immediately, and will write the ſucceſs of my journey before I cloſe this letter.

* * * * * *

It was late laſt night when I left Belle-Vue, and, I confeſs, notwithſtanding my prejudice, I returned with very different ſentiments of General Moncraſs, than what I carried with me there.

Mrs. Montford's lingering illneſs, which confined her the two laſt years of her life, prevented her viſiting at Belle-Vue as frequent as ſhe had always before done; Lady Mary often came to the Hermitage, by which means I had the honor to be very well acquainted with her ladyſhip, although I was hardly perſonally known to the General: It is true, Caroline and I, both ſometimes attended Mrs. Montford prior to her illneſs, on the public days, to Belle-Vue; yet as there were generally a large mixed company on thoſe occaſions, it was no wonder ſuch a mere youth

youth as myſelf ſhould be nearly overlooked; or that my own attention ſhould be engroſſed more by the multitude than an individual, to whom I had only been formally introduced.

General Moncraſs is, however, a very agreeable man, ſo much ſo, that I thought ſeveral times in the courſe of the day, next to being Edward Harley of the Hermitage, I could like to be General Moncraſs; to have juſt ſuch a heart, ſo noble, ſo expanded, ſo alive to the feelings of humanity, ſo attentive to the claims of juſtice and mercy, ſo generous, ſo charitable, ſo abundantly poſſeſſed of the means to be ſo; and, in ſhort, ſo every thing he is, except the faithleſs huſband of Lady Mary, and the lover of Agnes: if there were many ſuch men in the world, it would certainly mend.

I apologiſed for not waiting on him earlier, with my grateful acknowledgments for the honour he had done me:

I had rather, young man, replied he, you had accepted it without any acknowledgment; but, perhaps, he added with a benevolent ſmile, you have thought better, and are come to inform me you will yet be a ſoldier——

I bowed, with a negative air he perfectly comprehended, and entered on the ſtory of the Miller's daughter.

Good God! ſaid he, the tear ſtarting in his eye, how eaſy are the progreſſions to vice, and how callous does it render the heart of man!

Hodge was ordered to attend.

The fellow, ſiſter, who was a few months agone one of the moſt ſheepiſh, ſhamefaced boobies in the pariſh, is now a compleat, audacious livery ſervant; he caſts a look of incorrigible

gible impudence at me, and heard the charge againſt him, with a ſmothered grin on his countenance——

The General condeſcended to recapitulate the injuries he had done the girl and her family; he painted with equal truth, and juſtice, the ruined peace, loſt character, and deplorable ſituation of the unhappy female, whom artleſs love for him, had deprived of every other comfort; and inſiſted on his making all the reparation, now in his power; you ſhall marry the young woman, added he——

The fellow had been in *the world*; it was not for him to be concerned at ruining an innocent girl, nor at any of the conſequences, ſo pathetically deſcribed by his maſter——

Marry her; I hope your honor won't inſiſt on that.

Why ſo, ſirrah; did you not promiſe to marry her? promiſe; oh, pleaſe your honor, if I did, that won't argufy; to be ſure when I knoed no better, I mought ſay a few civil things—*civil things, ſiſter!! there's improvement!* but that was when I worked at the mill; but now pleaſe you its quite another gueſs matter; becaſe as why, if every gentleman's ſervant was obliged to marry girls, becauſe they promiſed, why, lord love your honor, it could not be, for a man mought be hanged; for whereof he'd ha more wives than hairs to his head; and that I dare ſay his honor, Mr. Harley, knoes is againſt the goſpel, and your honor knoes it is againſt the law——

The General was enraged, and gave orders if he did not agree to marry the girl, he ſhould be inſtantly diſcharged; he choſe the latter, and

ſet off the moment he was paid his wages, (fearing, I ſuppoſe, the pariſh officers) for London; where, if his further improvements are as rapid as thoſe at Belle-Vue, it may be preſumed it will not be long before he reaches the ſummit of preferment——

My heart ſunk within me, when I reflected on the conſequences of the wretch's barbarity; the poor girl, her ſituation, her honeſt father, and ſick mother, with all their ſorrows about them, ruſhed on my mind; the ſhame, and conſequent miſery of an hitherto admired, and virtuous maiden, ſtruck me the more forcibly, as I knew her fondneſs for her deſtroyer.—

The General lamented his inability to enforce either juſtice, or relief, to the injured ſufferer; obſerving, with truth, that marriage would not from ſuch a fellow, have enſured her tolerable treatment; as it was too probable, her deviation from virtue, would be puniſhed by the reproach and abuſe of her ſeducer; that her preſent ſituation, wretched as it was, would ſubmit to time, but a bad huſband was an incurable evil.

He preſſed me to dine with him; he would introduce me, he ſaid, to a very elegant female, whoſe beauty was her leaſt perfection; and whoſe mind was as ingenuous as my own.——

I accepted the invitation; but, eager as Caroline is for a deſcription of his Agnes, I muſt firſt be permitted to give you the obſervations I have made on a nobler ſubject; the General himſelf.

He is then, as you know, a very fine figure, and has the perfect deportment of a gentleman; the

the brilliancy of his eyes, when you ſaw him, had perhaps ſuffered from time, but they are now alſo fraught with a melancholy, which gives a moſt intereſting turn to his countenance; yet he has a lively affability, the reſult of that politeneſs, which Bruyere deſcribes as "a cer-"tain care by our manner, and words, to make "others pleaſed with *us* and with *themſelves*;" he is the only perſon in whom I ever ſaw the gaiety of youth ſo happily blended with the experience and wiſdom of age, as to preſerve entire the reſpect due to the latter, while the ſenſes are captivated with the faſcinating vivacity of the former; his converſation thus tempered, cannot be but rational, and entertaining; his wit is good ſenſe enlivened, and his heart, which a child might read, is the ſeat of generoſity and ſenſibility—the tear dropped from his manly eyes, while I recited the hiſtory of Patty Lucas, and the tribute to ſenſibility, he neither attempted to conceal or diſplay; but ſuffered it to take its courſe, regardleſs of what comments might be made on an exhibition ſo unuſual.

It was a juſt obſervation of Mrs. Montford, (but when indeed did that dear woman make an unjuſt one) that gentlemen, who have been uſed to military command, always preſerve a kind of deſpotic authority over their ſervants, and the male branches of their family, while they are in the ſame proportion, more gentle and indulgent even to the frailties of their females, than is generally met with among the civil departments of ſociety; General Moncraſs has all this, but though abſolute, he is no tyrant; his commands muſt inſtantly, and unequivocally,

quivocally, be obeyed; but then they are dictated by reaſon, and are neceſſary to good order—you know it is the maſter who ſpeaks, more from the alacrity with which he is obeyed, than the ſtern manner of giving his orders; he has one faithful domeſtic, who is grown old in his ſervice; whatever ſubordinate offences are committed in the family, are tried in the form of a court-martial, where this grey-headed veteran preſides, whoſe ſentence is always definitive——I am, ſaid the General, ſo ſatisfied with Gallini's principles, as well as acquainted with his good ſenſe, and have had withal ſuch abundant proofs of the gentleneſs and compaſſion of his nature, that I dare truſt him with the laſt thing a wiſe maſter will part with to a ſervant—*which is power.*

We were at this period of a very agreeable converſation, when dinner was announced; and the General led the way, through the elegant ſuite of apartments, into the eating parlour, where, as the table was ready covered, I was introduced with very little form to miſs, or, as he chuſes to call her, Mademoiſelle De Courci; there was a delicacy in the arrangement of the ſeats, which, in reſpect to the abſent *real* lady of the houſe, pleaſed me: the dining table is round, and the covers were ſo judiciouſly placed round the epergne, it is impoſſible to ſay which was the head of the table; except indeed, that were to be determined by the place where the lady was ſeated; there was alſo at table a middle aged well-bred lady, Madame de Vallmont; a very ſenſible, reſpectable woman, who lives on terms of friendſhip with Miſs de Courci; of the latter, I could not but obſerve, ſhe conducted herſelf

herſelf with ſuch a marked propriety, ſuch a collected, invariable delicacy, that had I not been acquainted with her character, I ſhould have thought her the quinteſcence of elegant ſimplicity.

"Bluſhing," ſaid Diogenes, "is the completion "of virtue," and Pythia decided, *that* to be the moſt beautiful color, which modeſty raiſes in virtuous perſons; what the ſenſations are, which cauſes the ſparkling blood to mantle in the cheeks of Miſs De Courci, is perhaps not ſo eaſy to determine: certain it is, the effect is enchanting; ſhe is really a woman, whoſe charms would juſtify any exceſs of virtuous fondneſs; and it is no wonder, the General having once reconciled himſelf to the enormity of his firſt error, ſhould be gratified in ſuch apology for his perſeverance in it, as is ſeen in the ſweet countenance of Miſs de Courci.

He is certainly exceſſive fond of her; but again, I ſay, did I not know the contrary, I ſhould conclude from the manner of both, that it was the fondneſs of a tender father, repaid by the filial love and gratitude of a ſenſible and amible daughter: ſeveral times, my dear Caroline, during the day, pleaſing as it paſſed in other reſpects, did I ſecretly, and painfully regret, the partial pleaſure which beamed on the General's countenance, whenever he addreſſed, or was addreſſed by Agnes—had not Lady Mary for its object; I am grieved to ſay it, but all hopes of weaning her huſband from his preſent attachment, is vain; I have given you the outlines of Agnes De Courci, but there remains undeſcribed a myriad of charms, and thoſe not merely perſonal;

ſonal; you would be ready, Caroline, to weep over ſuch a wreck of virtue, and lament with me ſhe is not *all* perfection——

And thus, having ſo far performed the taſk you gave me, I have a return to aſk from you.

I am but very ſuperficially acquainted with the former events of the hiſtory of General and Lady Moncraſs; they are, I have heard, extraordinary; the laſt are no leſs ſo, and my viſit to Belle-Vue yeſterday has raiſed a curioſity I am deſirous to have gratified: the inconſtancy of a man of faſhion, and his ſeparation from his wife, are things ſo common in the great world, that, excepting the intereſt I took in Lady Mary's diſtreſs, I heard of it without a ſenſation of wonder, or deſire to be acquainted with any more of the ſtory, than what common fame conveyed to my Hermitage; but now that I have ſeen the General, and find him ſo near my ſtandard of what man *ſhould be*, one inſtance only excepted, I wiſh alſo to hear all that *can* be *known* concerning him; ſuffer me to owe this pleaſure to your elegant pen, my dear ſiſter; let me travel with you through thoſe progreſſive ſcenes, which at preſent terminate ſo much to the diſcredit of human nature;—Alas, poor human nature!

I was the meſſenger of liberality from Bell-Vue to the mill; dame Lucas s lameneſs is thought to be incurable; Patty, who is the eldeſt child, ſupplies to the reſt the place of the ſick mother, and is alſo the notable miſtreſs of the dairy: ſhe was bathing her mother's lame leg when I entered; in as gentle terms as poſſible, I told her the ſucceſs of my embaſſy, ſhe heard me with tolerable fortitude, 'till I concluded;

cluded; when finding that Hodge was gone, never perhaps to return, ſhe gave a piercing groan, and repeating his name, ſunk lifeleſs at her mother's feet; whoſe ſhrieks ſoon brought her huſband from the mill, and, aſſiſted by two or three female neighbours, placed the poor girl on a bed, where ſhe lay 'till the appearance of death was removed by violent and convulſive hyſterics.

I endeavoured to comfort the parents, and pacify the children, with whom I had hitherto been a great favorite, but who now eyed me with no ſmall malignity, as the herald of misfortune to their mammy ſiſter as they called her, but did not ſucceed; I left the houſe unable to alleviate their ſufferings, or repreſs my own feelings.

Caroline, what ſhall we ſay to theſe things? the thunder of the Omnipotent is not heard, the lightning's flaſh not ſeen, nor the unerring vengeance of the Almighty dreaded; while the guiltleſs, and unſuſpecting, become the victim of deceit and barbarity, the betrayer triumphs in the ſucceſs of his cruelty, and the poor unoffending innocent ſinks under woes inflicted by the hand it loves, even in death; whoſe fell ſtab it met with unapprehenſive joy.

When man was firſt created, all the other faculties, mental and external, were crowned with heaven's beſt, laſt gift, reaſon.

Love, gratitude, truth, compaſſion, and fidelity, might well, and naturally, be expected to aſſociate with reaſon.——

But whence came deceit, falſehood, cruelty, and foul ingratitude? how were they admitted into the ſeat of reaſon?—Oh Caroline, with ſuch impreſſions on the mind, there would be no

end to reflection; nor any comfort to be derived from it, except that "the brink of the grave is "the bulwark, where the remaining evils of "life are accumulated; but beyond it is an eter-"nal calm."

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

Mrs. Dowager Butler to Lady M. Moncraſs.

Soho-Square.

STILL unable to attend my dear couſin perſonally, I flatter myſelf ſhe will believe the greateſt conſolation I can receive, under my misfortune, is to have it in my power to ſerve or oblige her.

Yes! Lady Mary, I too well know your fondneſs for the ingrate to doubt the diſtraction of your mind; and however ready you may be to take blame to yourſelf, I well know whenever paſſion has been predominate, from what ſource its exceſs has ariſen.

Good God!—when I look back—when I compare the paſt with the preſent, I could credit no other pen but yours; the narrative you have favoured me with, is ſo utterly unaccountable, ſo out of all poſſible comprehenſion, that I can hardly believe it real.——

Ungrateful man! And is it, indeed thus our weak ſex are rewarded for inviolate faith, and fondneſs unſpeakable?——

Yes, madam! it is, indeed, too true, all is confirmed by young Harley: I incloſe the copy of his letter to Mrs. Butler, you ſee—but I have not patience—a man at his time of life, his character—but it is a privilege the lords of the cre-

ation will monopolize; they contend that the right to render themſelves conſpicuouſly ridiculous, without fear, or ſhame, is the charter of their ſex—would that were all—that *they* were the only ſufferers ———And oh! my dear friend, would to God, that the conviction of your huſband's baſeneſs could reſtore your tranquillity.—

Oh! no doubt, we ſhall hear much more of the paragon of Belle-Vue; ſet a young fellow once going, in praiſe of a chit with a round face, if the noſe be not prepoſterouſly miſplaced, if ſhe can ſee, and has a tongue, he will find a pleaſure in his own deſcription, and not eaſily give it up——God forgive me!—I wiſh a moſt precious puniſhment to the General; but, I dare ſay, the creature knows better, elſe, an elopement with our philoſopher, would, in my opinion, expiate all the reſt of her ſins; and I ſuppoſe they are a decent catalogue.

Surely, Lady Mary, Julia cannot, after the treatment *you* have received, think of Reuben with her uſual partiality; you are certainly right in giving her to Lord Morden; he is not, I grant, ſo well ſpoken of in point of morality, as one would chuſe; but *your* ſufferings are inflicted by a *moral man*; a libertine may diſſipate his fortune, and injure his family—but I defy him to ſtab a woman to the heart, as our *moral man* has done: I do not, however, mean to imply, that Lord Morden is a libertine; he has, it is ſaid, indulged himſelf in ſome toniſh freedoms—What young man of faſhion has not? he may not make the worſe huſband for that, Julia is handſome, lively, and ſenſible; *her* fortune, as

you

you will take care to ſettle it, will be a bond for kind treatment;—at any rate, ſhe muſt not be a Moncraſs.

You obſerve the requeſt Harley makes to my daughter; I think he muſt be obliged; we ſhal further engage, not only his intereſt, but his curioſity: as he becomes more acquainted with your Ladyſhip, he will feel for your diſtreſs, and wiſh to diſcover the ſecret motives which could influence the General to act as he has done; theſe he will naturally communicate; ſo that, if not forbid by you, I ſhall furniſh Mrs. Butler with materials for your hiſtory, which ſhe is impatient to begin.

I cannot help ſmiling in the midſt of my anger, to think how little theſe young people ſuſpect this fine correſponding-ſcheme, which they fancy is to pourtray every action is a contrivance of two old tabbies, as my ſaucy ſon would call us; and who, if he knew our plan, would pay very little reſpect to our deſire of prying, by his friend's means, into the ſecrets of Belle-Vue; what moſt juſtifies the duplicity, (if it may be ſo called) in us is, that if Harley knew the uſe made of his letters, or, if Caroline had the remoteſt ſuſpicion they were communicated to your Ladyſhip, one would not write, nor the other communicate, *all* we wiſh to ſee.

Mrs. Butler now grows ſo important in her ſize, and ſo urgent in her entreaties for me to continue with her, until her apprehended hour is paſt, that, after having been long a tender nurſe to me, ſhe would complain, and, I think, with reaſon, if I refuſe her; I ſhall by that time,

I truſt,

I truſt, have regained ſtrength, to enable me to undertake my journey to you.

Heaven be your comforter, my dear friend; ſummon, I beſeech you, your excellent underſtanding to your aid; let not the perfidy of *man* triumph over the friend of

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

Lady Mary Moncraſs to Mrs. Dowager Butler.

Bath.

CERTAINLY, my dear Conſtance, nothing can be more fair; if the young man will be ſo good as to entertain, let him be alſo entertained in his turn; I incloſe papers which may poſſibly aſſiſt your memory.

Harley is a very good creature; I am particularly attached to him; he has ſome claims, of which he will always remain ignorant, on my friendſhip; and could he be perſuaded to enter the great world, my father would exert all his intereſt in his favor; but the ſtrange manner in which Mrs. Montfort educated him, and the odd fancies ſhe was ſo fond of inſtilling into his young mind, has, I fear, given him a vaſt deal of wiſdom, with a very ſmall portion of common ſenſe: and it may be an inſtance of the former, that he chuſes to keep out of the connections, where the latter only can be of uſe to him.

I know not how it is, Conſtance, but I feel a kind of ſelf reproach, about practiſing on the ingenuity of ſuch a guiltleſs creature; and it is a Hudibraſtic ſalvo, only, that can reconcile me to my own principles; he, you know, fixes the ignominy of perjury on the framer of oaths,

"'Tis

" *'Tis he that makes the oath that breaks it,*
" *Not he that for convenience takes it.*"

So I wiſh to lay our cunning (I muſt give it that opprobrious epithet) among the reſt of his ſins—at the General's door; but it rebounds, and crimſons the cheek of your

M. MONCRASS.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

Mrs. Butler to Edward Harley, Eſq.

PROFIT by my example, ſee how ready I am to oblige *you*.

General Moncraſs, my dear Edward, is the only ſurviving ſon of the Earl of Moncraſs, whoſe name you find among the ill deſtined chiefs who followed the fortunes of the late Pretender, and whoſe all were ſacrificed to miſtaken loyalty in the rebellion of forty-five.

The family of Moncraſs is ſaid to be lineally deſcended from a female branch of the houſe of Stuart, and the chiefs have, in different wars, been equally ſignalized for their bravery in battle, and their mercy in conqueſt:—Mrs. Butler, who is well-read in hiſtory, declares, Scotland does not boaſt a more noble race:—the men, ſhe ſays, were to a proverb valiant, and the women virtuous; and in all the anecdotes, which the annals of the Scottiſh nation have handed down to poſterity, the name of Moncraſs has ſtood among the higheſt on the liſt of fame.—Ever ſteady in their faith, invincible in their courage, and unſhaken in loyalty, and attachment to their natural princes—it is the leſs wonder, that the late Laird ſhould be among the firſt who offered themſelves voluntary champions in the cauſe

cauſe of that unfortunate adventurer, "Charles Stuart."

Lord Moncraſs had been liberally educated, and his fortune was large; but having married young the daughter of a neighbouring Peer, who had little more to boaſt than her beauty, and family honors, and who added to the ſtrength of his houſe by preſenting him yearly with an addition to it, he prudently reſolved to reſide entirely at the family-caſtle, and there perſonally ſuperintend the education of his children, who, except one daughter, were all males.

Lord Moncraſs was a rigid catholic, and his Lady being alſo a ſtrict bigot to the ſame faith, their children were unfortunately brought up members of the church of Rome; ſo that they were thereby precluded from the uſual reſources of proviſion for the younger branches of their family, by procuring for them commiſſions in the military or naval ſervice of their country.

The eſtabliſhment of five ſons, who were either to be ſettled in independence at home, or ſent into foreign ſervice, may be ſuppoſed to be a great weight on the mind of ſo haughty a peer, and ſo affectionate a father as Lord Moncraſs. The preſent General, who was the youngeſt but one, and twin-brother to the only daughter of the family, very early evinced h s inclination to a military life; and at the age of fifteen, requeſted his father to give him credentials to an uncle then in the Portugueſe army, through whoſe intereſt *he* might alſo procure a commiſſion, and begin his career in the profeſſion of arms, which his heart panted after.

The troubles in Scotland, were at this time, on the point of breaking out; and Lord Moncraſs,

craſs, as well as his brother, the Colonel, then at Liſbon, were deeply engaged in all the cabals forming in behalf of the young Pretender. Three of his ſons, fine promiſing young men, were embarked in the ſame fatal cauſe, and were all appointed to very high offices in the mock-miniſtry; the fourth, filled with the ardor of juvenile heroiſm, was conſtantly beſeeching his father and mother to ſend him to Portugal; the fifth was yet too young to have his deſtination fixed.

Notwithſtanding Lord Moncraſs's ardent attachment to the houſe of Stuart, there were moments when the poſſibility of their not being ſucceſsful would intrude on the warm hopes his zeal inſpired, even when he moſt exulted in the courtly honors promiſed his family, and the glory of being one of the principal means of reſtoring a prince of his own race to the throne of Scotland; the dire conſequences to himſelf and children of a failure in their enterprizes, aroſe in terrible array to his imagination. Lady Moncraſs was a perfect heroine; regard not me, ſhe would ſay; ſhould miſadventure attend our cauſe, I ſhall die with pleaſure for my prince.

Each of their ſons, whoſe age entitled him to be confided in, expreſſed the ſame enthuſiaſtic ardor; and Lord Moncraſs gloried in the loyalty of his family. But what, ſaid he, ſighing, if we fall, will become of our lovely daughter? For her, indeed, the mother *alſo* trembled; at ſight of her opening beauties, and the thouſand nameleſs graces that ſhot from her clear blue eyes, maternal tenderneſs momentarily triumphed over miſtaken loyalty.

After

After many conſultations on the ſubject, they determined on ſending her, under the care of a faithful domeſtic, with her twin-brother, to Colonel Moncraſs,—And, ſaid the ill fated nobleman, that my fears for the future fate of this darling of my ſoul, may not unnerve me in the hour of danger, I will remit her penſion to my brother, with ſtrict orders to have her immediately profeſſed, ſhould ſhe become fatherleſs.

The minds of women, my dear Edward, are generally thought to acquire ſtrength, or, at leaſt, to reach maturity earlier than thoſe of men; but it ſhould ſeem it was not ſo Lord and Lady Moncraſs judged of their children; for, while they wept over their daughter, who was a beautiful girl juſt entering her fifteenth year, they cloſeted young Reuben; and, as if influenced by a preſage of the ſad cataſtrophe that awaited their family, ſolemnly recommended his ſiſter to his love and protection; entreated him to ſupply to her, by his attentive tenderneſs, thoſe abſent relatives, thoſe fond friends, from whom her deſtiny might, perhaps, for ever ſeparate her; and they conjured him never to deviate from the principles of honor and rectitude, which had been inſtilled into his young mind by his noble parents.

Take this ſword, Reuben, ſaid Lord Moncraſs; (vainly ſtriving to conceal his anguiſh, his voice faultering, and his eyes up-lifted to heaven) and with it, thy father's bleſſing; —let it not reſt in the ſcabbard when the honor of thy country, or the glory of the prince thou ſerveſt, demands a ſoldier's aid—but never diſhonour thy own nature, or thy father's houſe, by

by drawing it in the defence of folly, or in the heat of paſſion; a tavern broil, or vindictive ſpirit, is equally diſgraceful to a man of honor. —Go, my ſon, thou can'ſt not travel out of the reach of Providence; thou canſt not command ſucceſs, but thou may'ſt deſerve it:—remember, at the moment when thou receiveſt thy father's fond—perhaps his laſt adieu, when he put the ſword, he had long worn himſelf, into the hand of his beloved ſon, *his* principles were untarniſhed by *one* unjuſt thought, and his honor, bright as the blade of the weapon he wore for its defence;—Go thou, my ſon, "and do likewiſe."

Penetrated with the ſolemnity and tenderneſs of this ſcene, and overwhelmed with dutiful fondneſs and regret, the youth, on his knees, promiſed a ſtrict adherence to the will of his parents, and a firm attachment to their principles both of loyalty and faith. Lord and Lady Moncraſs fervently praying for a bleſſing on them, then tore themſelves from their parting children.

They arrived ſafe at Liſbon. Miſs Moncraſs was immediately entered as boarder in a convent, where many noble families placed their daughters; and the young hero was received with every mark of honor due to his birth, and aſpiring ſpirit, into the Portugeſe army: his Majeſty, the then king of Portugal, preſented him his brevet himſelf.

Whether it was, that matters were not yet ripe, or from what other cauſe, the rebellion did not break out this year, and Lord Moncraſs had the pleaſure to hear from his brother the higheſt encomiums on both his children, but the following

following year Europe was in flames; Charles landed in Scotland, and was inſtantly joined, among other noblemen, by Lord Moncraſs and his three eldeſt ſons.

The end of this rebellion proved fatal to the houſe of Moncraſs; the two eldeſt ſons were killed in different rencontres in England, whither they followed the pretender; the third received a deadly wound, while fighting by his father's ſide at Preſton: and, at the laſt deciſive battle, Lord Moncraſs himſelf, covering the Pretender's retreat, received a blow from a Highland loyaliſt which deprived him of ſenſe, and he was taken priſoner by a party of horſe, whoſe irritation againſt him was the ſtronger, as he certainly prevented Charles from falling into their hands, and thereby deprived them of the great reward ſet on his head;—inſtead, therefore, of treating him with the reſpect and attention due to his rank, he was ſuffered to linger under the anguiſh of a great number of wounds 'till the troops reached their head-quarters; when the royal Duke, who commanded the army, being informed of his ſituation, and probably ſated with the vengeance he had taken on the foes of his father, ordered the wounded chief to be properly attended; and it is poſſible he might have recovered, had not the untimely fate of his wife, and young ſon, been incautiouſly told him.

That unhappy Lady, as ſoon as the certain news of the defeat, where all was loſt, reached her, fled from the caſtle in the night, with her young ſon, and in attempting to croſs a river, in a place where it was not fordable, an end was at once put to their misfortunes and their lives.

lives. Their bodies were afterwards taken up, and buried with family honors, in the ancient receptacle of the houſe of Moncraſs.

Theſe cruel tidings, brought to the wounded Lord, almoſt as ſoon as he recovered his ſenſes, threw him into a fever, which putting a period to his life, ſaved him from thoſe further misfortunes which awaited the other noblemen, who had ſhared his fate in being made the priſoners of an offended king.—

And thus, my dear Edward, I have, you ſee, began to evince my readineſs to oblige *you*,—let my good-nature operate in kind;—be ſure you write all that paſſes at Belle-Vue. My James ſays he will put every thing you wiſh our good mother not to ſee between hooks—but as ſhe is ſo kind as to furniſh me with moſt of the particulars I have and ſhall ſend you, reſpecting the Moncraſs family, *her* curioſity muſt alſo be indulged by the ſight of your Arcadian anecdotes.

This is an enormous letter; but I could not prevail on myſelf to conclude it 'till I had finiſhed the hiſtory of Lord and Lady Moncraſs, and the part of their family who periſhed in the rebellion. I ſhall begin my next with the young ſoldier we left in Liſbon.

C. BUTLER.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

Edward Harley, Esq. to Mrs. Butler.

Hermitage.

WHAT a treasure, my Caroline, is your correspondence!—What an obligation does it confer on your grateful Edward!—It was in vain, after reading your affecting history of the unhappy family of Moncrass, that I courted rest. Sleep, the sweet nurse of exhausted nature, affrighted at the calamitous consequences of civil discord, wing'd her airy flight to pillows, unstained with sympathetic sorrow—yes, Caroline! my eyes paid a sad tribute to the woes of the misguided Scottish hero, and I am filled with more than female curiosity to know the remainder of the interesting story.—Let me, I beseech you, thank my sister, my friend, for a very large packet next post; and in return, the best I can make, I will beguile you also of your tears for the fate of my poor village maid.

Patty is still ill—very ill; I visit her daily: the heretofore bright dressers, and large oak tables, mourn her inability to perform her accustomed task: the polished hearth, and shining pot-lids, no longer grace the miller's kitchen; the birds and flower-pots are totally neglected; and the children are of all colours, but that the water

water leaves on the ſkin; they ſit on the green bank before the door, and announce to all that paſs, that mammy's leg is worſe, and dear ſiſter Patty's heart is breaking.

Poor Lucas is unable to work, the neighbours are therefore obliged to carry their corn two miles off to be ground; and the moſt inſenſible will feel for themſelves; and this inconvenience being general, the cauſe is as generally imprecated: Hodge has been piouſly, and heartily, ſent to perdition by the whole pariſh; but Hodge is, moſt probably, at the ſame inſtant, a mighty clever fellow,—too clever to reflect on the deſolation his vices have wrought in an honeſt family.—Well, Caroline, we may moralize, but we can do no more.

I have ſent a woman to aſſiſt in taking care of the younger children, but the officiouſneſs of fond affection will not reſign the object of its care, however unable to perform the ſad office, of watching the laſt look, and ſuſtaining the dying form on which our ſorrows hang.—There ſits the unhappy girl, ſupported by her father, her head reclining on the boſom of her lame mother, the roſe for ever faded on her cheek, the mild luſtre of her eye no longer drowned with tears, but bent on the earth in joyleſs ſolemnity: Adown the honeſt miller's rugged cheek, the tears chaſe each other; the mother but, *her* looks, *her* anguiſh, are too poignant for expreſſion, too ſad for deſcription.

Alas, poor maid! I did not think that love had ſo ſtrongly ſeized thy young heart; ſhe *will* die, Caroline—ſhe *ſhould* not; and, I am ready to ſwear with benevolent Toby, ſhe *ſhall not*

not die,—but her diſorder is paſt the reach of medicine.

No ſubject to write on but Patty, I can think of nothing but her preſent woes, and thoſe which are paſt of the noble family of Moncraſs; ah Caroline, at the throne of mercy, who will arraign the ſouls of the victims of publick policy? who condemn thoſe of credulous fondneſs?

Did I tell you the General, whom I ſhall now behold with veneration, promiſed to drop in on my ſolitude, as he was pleaſed to call the Hermitage? I am honored with a general invitation to dine, and am now preparing to accept the laſt; he devotes, he ſays, this day to elegant friendſhip; polite, dangerous General Moncraſs, what would become of my reſolutions if, indeed, were many like you?

One word more—

So Caroline made a merit to Mr. Montford of my viſiting at Belle-Vue, and he is pleaſed at that prodigious effort. I am happy to gratify him in any point, that leaves me maſter of my own actions; but his threats are terrible,—he will adopt *your* child,—oh! what havoc will this reſolution make in my ſedentary ſcheme; you may tell him, but whiſper it as a profound ſecret, that I, alſo, mean to appoint the ſame little perſonage heir to the vaſt eſtates of, dear Caroline, your affectionate,

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

Mrs. Butler to Edward Harley.

Norfolk-Street.

I AM, my dear Edward, as much intereſted in the hiſtory I am ſending you of the noble, but unfortunate family of Moncraſs, as if I had never before heard it—nor indeed have I, but in a ſummary way: Mrs. Butler ſays, that Lady Mary and herſelf were ſo affected when the General related it to them, that they made minutes of moſt of the intereſting events, and from thoſe ſhe gives me the heads of what I now ſend you.

When the fatal tidings reached Liſbon of the loſs of his father, and the deſtruction of his family, the ſituation of the young orphan may be more eaſily imagined than deſcribed. Colonel Moncraſs had held ſecret correſpondence both with his brother and Charles.—Had the latter ſucceeded in his claims on the crown of Great Britain, it is not to be doubted but the whole houſe of Bourbon would have claimed their degrees of merit, in an event ſo important to the Stuarts, and ſo intereſting to all Europe.—

But now that the enemies of the reigning king were totally vanquiſhed, and the voluntary ardor with which he had been ſupported by his people, proved their zeal and attachment to him and his family, every power, not already actually engaged in the war, ſedulouſly avoided giving offence to a

prince, who, by reigning in the *hearts* of his people, they found was invincible.

The court of Liſbon, according to the policy of the times, withdrew the rays of its favor, both from Colonel Moncraſs and his young nephew; and, in a very ſhort time after this afflicting news had reached him, the Colonel was given to underſtand he muſt either accept of a commiſſion to the Brazils, or, together with his nephew, quit the ſervice, his Majeſty having no farther commands for him; at the ſame time a private hint was given, that a proper regard would be paid to their rank and merits.

The Colonel, enraged at this treatment, would have quitted the kingdom; but young Moncraſs, now the exiled heir of a family, whoſe eſtates were all confiſcated, and whoſe honors were no more, threw himſelf at the feet of his only relation, and beſought him to accept the offers made them, of going to the Brazils.—

Whither, my dear uncle, ſaid the noble youth, weeping—whither can we go? Will not the ſame cruel time-ſerving policy meet us in every court where we ſhew ourſelves?—France, now ſolicits peace—Rome, has no ſanctuary but in the boſom of her church—a general armiſtice will ſoon take place,—and even, if we were ſure of more tolerable treatment elſewhere, what has a ſoldier to do in times when the ſword reſts in the ſcabbard?—Let us go—what clime can be more barbarous to us than this?—Can any air be more peſtilential than that where we have been deprived of all the dear ties, which God has given equally to the infidel and the chriſtian?—They ſend us to war with the Ethiop—but what of that?—We carry our ſouls with us—the noble blood of Moncraſs

craſs *will mount*, go where we will!—While we ſupport our own dignity, what are countries or climates to us?

Colonel Moncraſs, charmed with the ſpirit of his nephew, ſtrained him to his breaſt.

For me, Reuben, anſwered he, it is of little import where I breathe the wretched remains of my life: I have now no country—no inheritance—no kindred but thee, dear native Scotland! thou art, for ever, loſt to me—no more ſhall I greet my uncorrupted vaſſals—no more hear the voice of welcome as I enter; the *now* deſolate habitation of my forefathers—ſacred ſpot! where heroes, and where kings firſt ſaw the light!—No more retrace the ſcenes where Oſſian filled the echoing valley with the woes of Fingal.

Thoſe involuntary exclamations of ſorrow and regret ſo overcame the Colonel, that his ſtruggling heart ſeemed burſting from his manly breaſt, and he continued in an undeſcribable agony, till he was relieved by a flood of tears.

Colonel Moncraſs was one of the braveſt of men; his undaunted ſoul had led him, a ſtranger to terror, through the embattled phalanx in the height of war and carnage; he knew no fear but that of offending his *God*; and miſguided as was his zeal for the fallen family of the Stuarts, yet even that error was *virtue* in *him*—becauſe he acted up to the dictates of his conſcience; which, in ſouls like his, is but another word for honor; when he heard of the deſtruction of his family, conſidering them rather as martyrs to loyalty, than victims to rebellion, although he felt like a man and a ſoldier.

The two orphans, then under his ſole protection, he looked on as being ſnatched from gene-

ral deſtruction by the peculiar providence of heaven, and he reſolved to be to them the father they had loſt—but he had now no means to aſſiſt them, except his pay from the court of Liſbon; —he was a batchelor of free principles, and would not have been rich, had his purſe not been continually drained as it was in aſſiſting the pretender.——

The rent roll of his eſtate in Scotland was not more than eight hundred pounds per Annum; that was now confiſcated, and himſelf under ſentence of outlawry—when therefore he beheld the amiable youth before him, and heard his animated expreſſions; when he conſidered him as literally all that was left of their noble, and ancient family; his titles, eſtates, and hereditary honors, all expunged; he gave vent, as I have deſcribed, to his agony—he wept—but *his* tears were not the common expreſſions of ſorrow, they were ſuch as Achilles ſhed for Briſeis.

The young Reuben ſaw this conflict in his noble minded uncle, with ſome degree of terror, but more compaſſion; his ſuſceptible heart mounted to his eyes, he fell on the boſom of his uncle, and mingled tears with his.

A few moments thus paſſed in the luxury of grief, compoſed the Colonel, and reanimated his nephew.—Let us go, ſir, ſaid he, ſince our Eden is for ever loſt to us; let us, at leaſt, ſeek the aſylum we are denied by chriſtians, among infidels; let us ſhew thoſe time-ſervers, *we* are ſuperior to the ſelfiſh arts that influence the policy of courts—when we fight their battles, and extend their conqueſts, they may recollect this treatment with ſhame!—

Yes, Reuben! I will go with thee, anſwered the Colonel, broken-ſpirited, and overwhelmed by

by misfortune—little honor, and leſs fame, can I now hope for in the profeſſion of a ſoldier; but I will watch thy ſteps, I will inſtruct thee how to temper the impetuoſity of youthful bravery with diſcretion; thou art a ſoldier, and thy ſoul pants for conqueſt—Oh! thou haſt much yet to learn: the fierce tyger, who ſeizes on his trembling prey, is a ſuperior brute to the fearleſs mortal who braves death,—a hero muſt do more, he muſt wiſh to preſerve life.——Oh! thou precious wreck of the loſt-treaſure of our houſe——thou haſt a ſoul worth an old man's care,—But thy ſiſter—

Alas, ſweet girl! anſwered Reuben, ſtriving to repreſs a freſh guſh of tears, what ſhall we do with her?

Diſpoſe of her as her father commanded, devote her to God; what elſe *can* be done for the laſt female of the houſe of Moncraſs, without dowry, family, or friends?

Reuben wept, but as it was now plain his father's intention was thus to diſpoſe of his daughter, in caſe of the worſt,—and that he had, when he made this diſpoſition, a preſentiment of *that worſt*—he could not offer an objection to a plan, which had ſo ſacred a ſanction; they, therefore, went immediately to the convent.

Miſs Moncraſs was now in her ſeventeenth year: the misfortunes of her family, though told in the gentleſt manner, ſo affected her health, ſhe would have certainly fallen a victim to grief, had it not been for the moſt refined friendſhip which ſubſiſted between her and a young novice, daughter to the Marquis St. Lawrens, which induced that amiable creature to attend on every ſtage of her diſorder, and with the moſt tender ſympathy,

ſo to blend piety, and reſignation, with comfort, that the poor orphan recovered, to transfer the fondneſs of her innocent heart from the grave of her parents, to the boſom of her friend; in whoſe arms ſhe was weeping, when her uncle and brother appeared at the grate.

Very few arguments were neceſſary to perſuade Miſs Moncraſs to abandon a *world* which had been ſo fatal to thoſe ſhe held moſt dear; without a ſingle tie in it, except her uncle, and brother, both of whom ſhe was now on the point of loſing, —what temptation had it for her?

Siſter Victoire, the dear friend, whoſe care had ſaved her life, was alſo deſtined to take the veil; her father was the French Miniſter at Liſbon, and according to the etiquette of the French Nobleſſe, it was neceſſary to preſerve the dignity of his family, by cutting off the younger branches from ſociety.

This amiable creature's heart accorded with her deſtiny; ſhe was a being formed of the moſt harmonious materials; content irradiated her countenance, peace dwelt in her heart, and the fervency of her devotions regulated every ſenſation of her mind.

Under the influence of ſuch an example, and in poſſeſſion of ſuch a friend, ſo far from having any objection to the veil—Miſs Moncraſs took her vows with a pious chearfulneſs, that inſpired reſpect, and rendered her brother perfectly happy.

The ceremony was performed the week before the Colonel and his nephew ſet ſail on their honorable exile.

The young devotee felt far more grief in parting from thoſe dear, and only relatives, than ſhe was ſenſible of in abandoning the reſt of the world:—

world :—and now, having ſettled her quietly in her convent, and ſent my Heroes in queſt of adventures, I ſhall conclude this letter with a quotation from your favoured author, that might have ſuited Miſs Moncraſs, and which is not inapplicable to my Edward.

" With the ſort of people, who have either " ſeen nothing of the world, or too much, where " is the merit of reſigning, what one is unac- " quainted with, or weary of ? The praiſe-wor- " thy recluſe, are thoſe who enter the world with " innocence, and retire from it in good-humour."

Adieu.

C. BUTLER.

LETTER XVIII.

Edward Harley, Eſq. to Mrs. Butler.

Hermitage.

ANOTHER day paſſed at Bell-Vue, retroſpectively delightful; if refined ſenſe, elegant hoſpitality, and a welcome, where friendſhip and politeneſs were blended, could render it ſo.

Who can reconcile the contradictions in this man's character? He is publicly ſaid to be of libertine principles, a violater of the marriage-vow, one who tramples on the laws of ſociety, who lives in open, and criminal intercourſe with one amiable female, while another, *his wife*, a woman poſſeſſed of every female virtue, to whom he is under uncommon obligations, feels the ſharp tooth of ingratitude, pines in ſecret, and is loſt to rank, ſociety, and all the comforts of life.——

Yet, this man can ſhed the tear of ſenſibility, compaſſion is the leading trait in his diſpoſition; he is bleſſed with a brilliant underſtanding; all his ſentiments are noble, his deciſions juſt, and his actions, as far as the eye of man can reach, marked by the ſtricteſt propriety:—but ſiſter, can we wonder a man *thus* accompliſhed, *thus* adorned with wiſdom, and experience, ſhould have it in his power to attach

tach to himſelf the voluntary affections of any woman, of a common ſhare of taſte, and underſtanding? Or, that having once reconciled the matter to his own conſcience, he ſhould not want arguments to convince one of the weaker ſex—pardon me, Caroline, the offence againſt honor is ſanctified by paſſion.

My opinion of Agnes riſes, as I become more acquainted with the General:—the woman for whom *ſuch* a *man* would go *ſuch lengths*, for whom he would *forego ſuch happineſs*, to whom he would make *ſuch a ſacrifice*, muſt be miſtreſs, not only of uncommon allurements, ſhe muſt, however it may be perverted, have a mind——A thouſand thanks, dear Caroline, your pacquet is juſt arrived—I kiſs your ſeal, and am ſo eager to proceed in the hiſtory, I have hardly patience to ſign myſelf your affectionate

EDWARD HARLEY.

* * * * * * *

Oh Caroline! my curioſity is painfully arreſted; I had opened your letter, and the evening being fine, walked out with it; without any previous intention, my ſteps were involuntarily turned to the mill; I had been ſo uſed of late to make morning and evening viſits there, that, with your letter in my hand, I was at their door before I knew I was on the way thither; are my lines crooked? Do you perceive the agitation of my nerves?——Patty Lucas is no more!

Oh ſir! cried the youngeſt boy, Patty is better, indeed ſhe is; and mammy gave us all

an apple for joy; pray go in, and you will have an apple too. I was ſo intereſted in your narrative, that although glad to hear the girl was better, I was not diſpoſed to be interrupted, and was turning away, when the woman I had placed there to aſſiſt in the family, came haſtily out, and told me Patty heard the children name me, and begged I would let her ſpeak to me.

Old Lucas was kneeling by the ſide of his dame, in thankful rapture; he wept even to ſobbing, whilſt ſhe audibly returned her thanks to Heaven for the gleam of hope, the preſent compoſure of their child afforded; and fervently prayed ſhe might be reſtored to her ſorrowing parents.

The girl herſelf had a crimſon flush in her cheeks, her lips were even more red, and her eyes ſhone brighter than when ſhe was in rude health; yet, Patty Lucas, within ſix ſhort months, was the pride of the village.

She extended both her hands towards mine, and with a modeſt confidence, I can never forget, drew it towards her, and preſſing it to her breaſt——

I have been, ſir, ſaid ſhe, very bad ſince I ſaw you this morning; and I was ſo ſorry, and ſo grieved——

Why, my girl, were you ſorry?

Becauſe, ſir, I had not, methought, thanked you half enough, nor prayed half enough, that God would bleſs you here and hereafter; and preſerve you from the ſnares of the falſe-hearted—Oh ſir! it is very hard to die—to die of love: ſome people may make a ſcoff of it—but believe me—believe poor Patty Lucas, it may

it may be—as to Hodge, I forgive him; he had a hard heart, but that, you know, he could not help;—and ſo I hope God will forgive him too;—but who will comfort my poor father and mother? Will you, ſir?—Will you conſort my poor mother, and help my honeſt father?—People will tell them of their daughter—they will want ſome good-body to take their parts.

Reſpiration became almoſt as difficult to me, as it was to the poor dying creature before me, who gaſped at every ſentence; I felt a riſing in my throat, which a lady would have called hyſterics, and could not anſwer.

She repeated her earneſt queſtion, Will you, ſir?—Will you comfort my poor father and mother? until a ſudden paleneſs overſpread her face, which became covered with large drops of cold ſweat; her eyes, now deprived of the tranſient luſtre which but a moment before dazzled my ſight, ſtill fixed their anxious looks on mine, while ſhe added, in a low hollow voice, If you ſay you will, I know I may believe you.

Shocked at an alteration ſo ſudden, and awful, I could not help thinking myſelf in the immediate preſence of the Deity; I ſolemnly promiſed to protect her parents.

One parting beam now ſhot from her cloſing eyes.——

Enough, enough—I am ſatisfied; and leaning her head back, on her diſtracted mother—without one ſigh, one groan, expired—poor Patty Lucas!

I cannot reflect, I fear I ſhould be wicked were I to attempt it. Dame Lucas will not long

long ſurvive her daughter—time may conſole the father; it is now the houſe of miſery; with ſuch an object in her coffin the voice of comfort cannot be heard; all that can be at preſent done for them, is to take care that want may not be added to their afflictions.

For the honor of your ſex, Caroline, I muſt tell you an anecdote you will not meet with often in the great world.

Twenty maidens, ſome of whom are ſervants, whoſe wages do not exceed forty ſhillings a year, have ſubſcribed their half-crowns for white gloves, and favours, to accompany my poor girl's remains to the grave; as many young men follow their example, and they have begged my *honor* to lead the proceſſion: I will take care their purſes are not lighter, for this mark of ſenſibility, but ſhall not comply with their requeſt.—

No! not even in the grave, will the malevolent, and envious, ſuffer their victims to reſt; Mrs. Swamp is grievouſly offended at all the maidens, as to the fellows, no wonder they are ſorry the creature was of their ſort; but for a virtuous damſel for to be ſeed in ſuch company, dead or alive—Oh, for ſhame! if Mr. Swamp was of her mind, (which he ſeldom is) he would excommunicate every ſoul on 'um; and as to Miſter Harley, ſhe wonders the dead can reſt in the grave, to think that poor dear Mrs. Montford's ſubſtance ſhould be ſpent after that faſhion, is a b rning ſhame, ſo it is; but howſoever, birds of a feather, ſome folks may be fond of ſuch ſort of trumpery, as huſſeys and baſtards, truth was not to be told at all times, becauſe why, ſhe believed ſome folks might, if truth was known, be baſtards themſelves.

Do you know, Caroline, I am weak enough to be diſturbed at this fooliſh woman's impertinence; not on my own account you may be ſure, but poor dame Lucas's. After the woman, who attends her, had told me of Mrs. Swamp's malice, looked emphatically in my face;—Ah ſir, ſaid the weeping mother, *ſhe* has no children, ſhe never gave ſuck, was not afflicted with ſickneſs, had no dear dutiful girl to nurſe her, nor, oh great God! ſhe cannot know a mother's pangs at ſuch a ſight as that, pointing to the ſtill lovely corpſe of her dead child.

Adieu, my beloved Caroline; I do not trouble you with any thing to James, as I write to him at G—, but beg you will render my beſt reſpects acceptable to the dowager Mrs. Butler, and when ſhe writes to the continent, hopes my name is not omitted among the equiring friends of Mr. Henry Butler.

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XIX.

Mrs. C. Butler to Edward Harley, Esq.

THE Colonel and his young charge reached the Brazils without any material incident, where the former after ſignalizing himſelf in many actions, and adding freſh luſtre to a character which required none, his own private ſorrows, added to what he always felt for the family to whom his fortune had been ſacrificed, co-operating with the bad air of the climate, he died within four years after his arrival at the Brazils.

Young Moncras ſucceeded him both in rank and character; but the loſs of his only friend was too ſincerely felt, and too bitterly regretted, to be eaſily forgotten; and he had beſides this another cauſe for anxiety, it was now a twelvemonth ſince he had heard from his ſiſter; her correſpondence had hitherto been very regular, not a ſhip from Portugal had touched at any part of the Brazils, but her fond wiſhes for his welfare were conveyed to him; the pleaſure he took in this correſpondence, was augmented by the perceptible improvement of her mind; her letters were at once affectionate, entertaining, and pious: but he had not received any of thoſe mementos

mementos of a ſiſter's love (altho' he had continued to write conſtantly to her) ſome months before the Colonel's death, and now a twelvemonth more had elapſed, without affording him the conſolation to know his ſiſter exiſted.

A bilious complaint, which gained ſtrength from the anxiety of his mind, was increaſing ſo faſt on his conſtitution, that by the advice of his phyſician, he wrote to the miniſter, praying leave to return to Liſbon for change of air: the feuds of the times which occaſioned the honorable exile, into which he was ſent, being now no more; he eaſily procured an order from court, and returned to Portugal, after having been ſix years abſent, in the twenty-third year of his age: his firſt viſit was to the Convent where his ſiſter was profeſſed.

Poor Moncraſs! born to experience all the bitterneſs of fortune, could hardly credit his ſenſes; when told that his ſiſter, the modeſt, amiable creature he left ſo ſatisfied, and ſo happy in her ſituation; her, whoſe expanding underſtanding had given him ſuch innate pleaſure, had violated her vows to Heaven, and eloped from the Convent: and ſo it actually proved.

To thoſe who know with what rigour this crime is puniſhed, and in what abhorrence it is held by rigid catholics, it will not appear ſtrange, that the young criminal had taken every precaution human ſagacity could ſuggeſt, to prevent her route and connections from being diſcovered; nothing had tranſpired that could throw the leaſt light on the tranſaction: Victoire had been privately interrogated, and had publicly ſtood the examination of the Inquiſitory Court—her grief and conſternation at this ſtep of her boſom friend,

was

was natural and ſincere; ſhe utterly denied any knowledge of her elopement; and declared, that ſo far from aiding or abetting her, had ſhe entertained the ſlighteſt ſuſpicion of her deſign—ſhe ſhould have held it a duty to that God, to whom they were both bound, to prevent ſuch a diſgrace being thrown on their holy religion, and the pious ſiſterhood.——

The rank, and family of this young nun, independant of her own virtuous character, precluded all ſuſpicion of her veracity.

The ſentence of excommunication, with all the terrible train of curſes, uſual on the commiſſion of ſuch extraordinary crimes, were publicly denounced againſt the young apoſtate, her abettors and acceſſaries; but the reſentment of the church proved in this caſe impotent, and all its endeavours to recover the loſt fugitive, abortive.

Young Moncraſs was born a catholic, but by no means a bigot: it is true he conſidered his ſiſter as an unhappy, ſinful woman, whoſe eternal ſalvation was forfeited by her breach of vow; but ſtill ſhe was his ſiſter—a ſiſter who was conſigned, with a *ſolemnity and tenderneſs* that ever dwelt on his mind, to his fraternal care, by his dead parents——

The ſame affections, ſentiments and paſſions, had filled their young hearts; they had grown up together with increaſing love, and all the warmth of youthful fondneſs: and ſo early divided from the reſt of his family, all his affections had naturally centered in her.

The young ſoldier's domeſtic ſorrow did not facilitate his recovery; he waited on Victoire, who burſt into an agony of grief when ſhe ſaw him;

him; they wept together, but the nun could not, or would not, give him any information reſpecting his ſiſter's affairs; and as to her laſt ſtep, ſhe declared ſhe had not the leaſt ſuſpicion of it, until, to her eternal ſorrow, it was irretrievable.

Poor ſinful creature! added ſhe, I pray that her penitence may be ſincere—I hourly implore the Virgin Mary to protect and inſpire her with true repentance. Greatly as I abhor the crime, I yet pray the criminal may now, and ever, eſcape the temporal puniſhment that would be the ſure reward of her guilt, was ſhe to be taken —Alas! ſuch is my dread of that event, this convent, once an earthly paradiſe, is now become horrible to me; I tremble at every ſummons to the Abbeſs. No ſtranger comes to the parlour without alarming my fears, and filling me with terror. I have ſolicited the Marquis to ſend me to Paris, where I may be immediately profeſſed; my parents wiſh indeed to defer my return to France until they can accompany me. But alas! I have loſt the ſiſter of my ſoul—eternally loſt her; and in this place am in agonies at the fear of her being brought back.

The Marquis, after ten years reſidence at this court, is now recalled. It is my mother's wiſh I ſhould be in France, where all their intereſt lies; and I have hopes I ſhall ſoon leave a place where every thing reminds me of my loſt friend —where I am hourly offending Heaven, by my inability to divide the ſin from the ſinner.

A flood of tears accompanied every word that fell from Victoire's lip, and the young ſoldier gave himſelf up to a grief and dejection that preyed on his conſtitution, and reduced his fine

figure

figure to a mere ſpectre; he did not, however, forget to pay his court to the prince, in whoſe ſervice his brows had often been crowned with laurels.

His Majeſty remembered the fine youth who accompanied Colonel Moncraſs to the Brazils; and knew he was the laſt branch of the family of Moncraſs: the fame of his bravery, and the report of his good ſenſe and humanity, had alſo reached the court; but the wan appearance of the young Hero, was ill calculated to revive the *memory* of his former pleaſing form; or dreſs it in the glowing tints which ever accompanies valiant actions, when added to a captivating figure.

It ſerved, however, to convince the King, that the leave he had ſolicited to return to Europe, was really neceſſary to his exiſtence.

The heart muſt have been impenetrable, that beheld his intereſting figure, and knew his misfortunes, without being prejudiced in his favor.

His Portugueſe Majeſty received him very graciouſly, and he was honored with the particular notice of the royal family; and notwithſtanding the diſaffection of his anceſtors, he was invited by the Engliſh ambaſſador to his table and aſſemblies.

And here, my dear Edward, I wiſh to proceed to the commencement of his acquaintance with Lady Mary—but I am much indiſpoſed, and muſt poſtpone the hiſtory until I am better. ——Adieu, I know I have your prayers.

CAROLINE BUTLER.

LETTER

LETTER XX.

James Butler, Esq. to Edward Harley, Esq.

Soho-Square.

GIVE me joy, dear Edward, my Caroline is safe: she has presented me with a cherub, lovely as herself; and both the dear angels are, thank God, well: I was not returned from the circuit when the happy news was brought me, but you may be sure I flew home on the wings of anxiety and love.

Caroline begs you will continue to write, and in order to encourage you so to do, my mother will give you the remaining part of General Moncrass's history.

Lord Ruthven's family are returned to Bath; his Lordship, by order of his physicians: Lady Mary too, is, we are grieved to find, very much indisposed.—One only shade is there in that woman's excellent character, the pride of her heart has destroyed her peace; had she given a little way, had she assailed the General with tears instead of reproaches, he would,—he must have soon seen his error; his heart is noble, and a man of stricter honor does not breathe—but he has also a competent share of pride; Lord Ruthven's reproaches must have sunk deep in such a mind as his—and Lady Mary is the sufferer; she adores her husband, and all her attempts to regain

gain her tranquillity, ſerves only to prey on her own health, and render herſelf and family miſerable.

Miſs Nevil'e ſuffers too; they ſee no company, and the poor girl is forbid holding any correſpondence with, or even ſpeaking of young Moncraſs; this reſtraint Julia very ill brooks; though perhaps it may be well for her, the eſtrangement took place when it did, for if I know any thing of the female heart, *her's* would infallibly have choſen young Reuben for its keeper:—Pray is he now with his father, or where?

So, this Agnes is handſome; is ſhe?—And accompliſhed?—And plays finely?——I know a young Barriſter, who was with us on the circuit, (an acquaintance of Mrs. de Vallmont's, the lady whom the General has made her duenna) he ſpeaks highly indeed of both Vallmont and Agnes; ſays, the former is a woman of honor and character, the latter an angel; and I aſſure you, was ſo offended when I laughingly anſwered, *a fallen one*, that I expected a challenge—ſo, if you hear of a certain ſpecial pleader having committed murder, don't be ſurpri'ed——I fancy my young bluſtering Barriſter is her lover.

Lady Mary ſtands ſponſor to our young ſtranger, and we mean to accept Major Melroſe's polite offer on the ſame occaſion.

I cannot but wiſh that the interview between her Ladyſhip and the General's friend may be productive, though I have really given the matter up——Articles on both ſides are ſigned.——

Ned, you don't mind politics; and if you did, I hate to write on the ſubject—but old Montford is minority mad: we ſend him every pamphlet and

and news-paper that comes out, and he has now taken it into his head, that it is extremely ſhameful either you, or I, are not in Parliament: Caroline told him, ſhe believed it would be a difficult matter to prevail on either of us to accept a ſeat in that auguſt aſſembly, even was it to be offered without any expence.

He was downright angry—Very well, madam, ſaid he, knitting his brows, and reſting on his cane,—then I'll tell ye what I'll do myſelf, I'll *marry*; and ſince you are all too proud to pay any court to the old fellow, you will know the value of my partiality *when it is loſt.* Poor Caroline was much hurt at this threat, as it ſeemed to imply a deſign to hold us in the meaneſt of all ſubjections, that of a dependance on his will; but he has great good-nature, notwithſtanding his oddities; the tear no ſooner gliſtened in Caroline's eye, than his own caught the infection; he bid her not mind him.

The old man will be doing, if he undoes the next moment. They parted good friends, though not without ſome oblique hints about the *ſacred character* of a *Britiſh ſenator*, and his intention that his Borough ſhould, next ſeſſions, be repreſented by *independent men*—but take notice, Mr. Edward Harley, I have no time to be a patriot.

Caroline deſires a thouſand kind remembrances may be added to thoſe of, dear Edward your affectionate

JAMES BUTLER.

LETTER

LETTER XXI.

Edward Harley, Eſq. to James Butler, Eſq.

Hermitage.

I PARTAKE your joy, my dear James; and ſend you the warm congratulation of friendſhip and brotherly love, on an event of ſuch importance to your family, and the happineſs of us all; our good Benſon found her youth renewed at the news, and begged, if ſo be as I could any way do without her, ſhe might go to London to attend on her dear young lady; ſhe had, ſhe ſaid, laid all my things ready a great while in expectation of going. I conſented, and ſhe accordingly ſet out this morning; good creature, I hope ſhe will not find her heart ſtronger than her body; I need not, I know, deſire you will ſend to fetch her from the inn.

I dined yeſterday at Belle-Vue, and was not a little gratified by the unbounded profeſſions of friendſhip and eſteem, with which I was honored by the noble owner of that charming manſion:—my ſiſter deſires I will give her a particular deſcription of Miſs De Courci's perſon; but this is a more difficult taſk than ſhe imagines; when I was laſt at Belle-Vue, Agnes was indiſpoſed, and ſhe has yet ſome remains of languor, which gives an exceſs of delicacy to her looks; there is an inſinuating

ſinuating grace in her manner that goes directly to the ſenſes: were I a poet, and meant to deſcribe the ſort of beauty which ſteals on the ſoul by ſure and imperceptible degrees, I think I ſhould be underſtood, after contemplating *her face* and *figure*; or, were I a painter, who had already drawn a perfect Venus, yet felt as painters I fancy often do, a ſomething wanting, a finiſh, a life glow, *do you comprehend me?* I am ſure Agnes De Courci's countenance would guide my pencil; her ſmiles are irreſiſtible, and her voice has muſic in its moſt common expreſſions—ſhe is, I believe, of what is called the tall middle ſize; there is a haughty turn in her carriage, which, added to her elegant form, conveys an idea of pride; but you feel the error the inſtant ſhe opens the prettieſt mouth in the world: ſince I have ſeen this lady, I have thought that *any* woman with *ſuch a mouth*, even if added to a very harſh and diſagreeable ſet of other features, would be enchanting—as to her eyes, I proteſt I cannot tell of what colour they are, only that they are extremely brilliant, and that the whole of her face was, I believe, never equalled.

I don't know how it is, but I think there is a reſtraint in the General's behaviour to her; his eyes indeed dwell with pleaſure on her countenance, and he pays an enthuſiaſtic reſpect to her opinion; his delight is in calling to obſervation the many fine accompliſhments ſhe certainly poſſeſſes; but yet, there is a ſomething that often clouds his countenance in the midſt of her faſcinations; I would hope it was the image of his noble wife; yet to confeſs truth, *I fear*, had I an Agnes,—I—but what ſtuff am I writing.

Old

Old Lucas holds his leaſe under Mr. Thrift, which being near expired, he had received notice to quit; the honeſt ſoul on the point of being turned out of a dwelling, in which he was born, and which has ſo long ſheltered, and ſupported his family, now recollects he has other children beſides her he ſo much lamented, and his grief for her death becomes leſs violent, as his cares for the ſurvivors increaſe.

I have taken a freſh leaſe in my own name of Mr. Thrift, who had no objection to his tenant but his poverty, and trouble; and ſuppoſing he would not, with a ſick wife, and large family, be able to pay the rent.—The mill now works again.

Can it be the abſence of old Benſon? Surely no! I am actually tired without having been employed; *you* will call it apathy; Mademoiſelle De Courci would ſay it is ennui——No matter, God bleſs you, and your better ſelf, my Caroline.

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XXII.

Mrs. Dowager Butler to E. Harley, Esq.

Soho-Square.

Dear Sir,

MY beloved daughter impoſes on me a taſk, which however agreeable to myſelf, may not, perhaps, be entirely ſo to you; as the cold inanimate prolixity of an old woman will form a great contraſt between her deſcriptions, and that of ſo ſprightly and elegant a penwoman as Mrs. Butler: you muſt, however, accept of my wiſh to indulge *her*, and gratify *you*, and take *matter* for *manner*.

When Colonel Moncraſs, (he had, you are informed, ſucceeded to his uncle's rank) was firſt introduced to the aſſemblies of the Engliſh ambaſſador, who was a man of the firſt quality, and lived in great ſplendor and magnificence: he was thought to be very near his diſſolution; and his invalid ſtate, added to the misfortunes of his family, intereſted all the Engliſh, who were then reſident at Liſbon, in his favor; the Earl of Ruthven, with his Counteſs, and young daughter, were of this number; Lady Ruthven laboured under a complication of diſorders, and was come to Liſbon in hopes to receive benefit from change of air; her daughter, Lady Mary, then in her eighteenth year, was univer-

ſally admired: the value of gold, is, I believe, pretty equal in all countries; and the great fortune to which ſhe was undoubted heireſs, would have ſtamped perfection on a form leſs attractive than her's; but the truth is, ſhe was really a moſt elegant young woman.

I had the honor to be of Lord Ruthven's party, as Mr. Butler was ſecretary to the Embaſſy; Lady Ruthven begged I would be her gueſt during her ſtay at Liſbon; her extreme ill health required, and would have commanded my attendance, had I not been, (which however I own I was) impelled by a ſtronger motive to accept her invitation.

My parents dying when I was very young, I became an orphan ward to Lord Ruthven; and his Lady, who was my neareſt female relation, had intirely ſuperintended my education: Ruthven houſe was my home. Lady Mary, is, it is true, five years younger than myſelf, but notwithſtanding this diſparity in our ages, we had, even at that early period of our lives, a mutual affection for each other, which ripened into the conſtant and warm friendſhip, that now, when youth and all its appendages are fleeting, is the honor and comfort of my exiſtence.

My heart was ever open to my young couſin, nor had her's a thought concealed from me. My marriage to Mr. Butler, not being in point of rank quite ſo eligible a one as my guardian thought my fortune entitled me to, was a ſecret to all but my couſin, a year after it had taken place; when my huſband's appointment to Liſbon, and my ſituation, rendered the diſcovery unavoidable; and it was matter of infinite joy, both to Lady Mary and myſelf, that we were not

not yet to be ſeparated. I left my ſon in England with my mother-in-law, and followed Mr. Butler to Liſbon, with the Ruthven family.

I perfectly remember the firſt time we ſaw Colonel Moncraſs——That poor young man, ſaid Lady Ruthven, carries death in his countenance; and by a ſort of ſympathy, invalids are apt to feel for each other, ſhe contracted a regard for him, which was the foundation of the intimacy that afterwards took place in the family.

The Ambaſſador introduced Mr. Moncraſs to Lord Ruthven, as a young officer in the Portugueſe ſervice; prudently paſſing over his forfeited rank and title: but they were both, notwithſtanding, very well known; and the reſpectful attention every where paid him, was as creditable to the feelings of his countrymen, as flattering to himſelf.

He very ſoon became one of our family; and, contrary to hope, his health began ſlowly to mend. Lady Mary, whoſe amiable and tender attention to her ſick mother, endeared her to every feeling heart, was alſo, on many occaſions, the blooming handmaid of Eſculapius to young Moncraſs; the Counteſs, who, like moſt people affected with ill-health, fancied ſhe could cure the diſeaſes of other people, tho' her own had baffled the art of medicine, was perpetually preſcribing for the Colonel; and Lady Mary was the fair adminiſtreſs of all the quackery her mother ſo laviſhingly beſtowed on him; but it ſometimes happened, that the medicines were forgot, in the pleaſing tête-à-têtes they authoriſed; Mr. Moncraſs was often called upon to

recount the misfortunes of his family, and the miſadventures of his youth; his heart, ever ſoftened at the recital, found itſelf attracted by the ſympathy he excited; our tears were blended with his; and the innocent Lady Mary might have been truly ſaid to

"*Love him for the dangers he had paſt.*"

In a few months, health began to reanimate his countenance, ſtrength and manly grace ſucceeded to the debilitated ſtate he was in, when introduced to us, and I do not remember to have ſeen a handſomer man; the young gentleman I am now addreſſing, is certainly a very fine perſon; but General Moncraſs, at the period I am writing of, was the moſt captivating figure I ever ſaw.

The Counteſs ſtill continued declining, and the Earl juſt then being ſeized with a violent fit of the gout, was thereby rendered incapable of attending us, in ſome little ſea excurſion, which our phyſicians ordered the Counteſs to take; we were therefore conſigned to the protection of Moncraſs.

Two months were taken up in thoſe little voyages, which though not attended with the hoped for benefit to the health of Lady Ruthven, paſſed as delighfully as rapid—nothing could exceed the polite and reſpectful attention of the young ſoldier, he ſeemed to exiſt but for us, and Lady Mary's heart was his involuntary reward; nor was he leſs attached to her; I was an intereſted obſerver, I perceived their mutual affection, and knowing the immenſe wealth my couſin would poſſeſs, and the affectionate friend-

ſhip

ſhip the Earl and Counteſs both bore the Colonel; ſaw no impropriety in their indulging the bias of their hearts; I thought them, indeed, born for each other, and looked forward to an union that promiſed ſo much certain felicity with pleaſure; but my anticipations were in every reſpect founded in error; their union was far, very far diſtant; and when it did take place you ſee, ſir, how ſhort lived the happineſs, I, fooliſhly thought, would laſt for life.

Lady Ruthven, tired out with the unavailing efforts of her phyſicians, and finding no benefit from change of climate, took a ſudden reſolution to return to England: the Earl had a yatch fitted up for the accommodation of his lady, and always in readineſs to ſail; a few hours notice only, therefore, were neceſſary, before all was ready for their embarkation.

To deſcribe the anguiſh of my young friend, or paint the deſpair viſible in the countenance of Colonel Moncraſs, would be alike impoſſible; Lady Mary threw herſelf on my neck—oh Conſtance! cried ſhe, what will become of me? I leave the only man my heart will ever acknowledge; I part, perhaps, for ever from him who is my fate—pity me, dear Conſtance, oh! were not my mother's life in danger, I would loſe *mine*, rather than to be torn from him—Yes, Moncraſs, I would die a thouſand deaths rather than leave thee.—

We were in this ſituation when he entered—my poor couſin juſt raiſed her head and then hid her face in my boſom; my arms were thrown round her, and we were all incapable of utterance; the Colonel bent his knee before us; and equally unable to conceal, or to repreſs his

emotion, took the hand of Lady Mary, preſſed it to his lips and precipitately retired.

What is he gone, cried ſhe? ſtarting—has he then left me? Moncraſs! Moncraſs! wringing her hands, return once more; let me once more behold thee—her voice raiſed, and repeating his name, reached him as he was traverſing an adjoining apartment—he haſtily returned.

The confuſion his re-appearance threw her into, crimſoned over her face, and neck, ſhe trembled and turned from him.

What, ſaid he (approaching and reſpectfully taking her hand) what would my lovely young friend, with her Moncraſs?

She turned half round—*my* Moncraſs, ſaid ſhe, deeply ſighing, as ſhe repeated his words—

Yes, Lady Mary, anſwered he, if the trueſt adoration, the fondeſt affection, the moſt heart-felt attachment, can make Moncraſs yours——

She interrupted him—dear Moncraſs, do not deceive me; the world, if it knew my weakneſs, how would it be deſpiſed? And my parents—ah, my God! how would they condemn it? Nay, perhaps, on reflection, I may deſpiſe, I may condemn myſelf; but in this dreadful moment, the only one my fate may ever offer; what are forms, or public cenſure, to the diſtracting anguiſh of my ſoul? ſay then again you are mine, and confirm it on your honor; and I ſwear (falling on her knees) by all the powers who protect innocence, I will be your faithful Mary as long as I exiſt.

Surprize, rapture, and love, were by turns predominant in the countenance of young Moncraſs; he drooped on his knees, and folding his

arms

arms round her, was going to ſpeak, when the Earl appeared at the oppoſite door.

Language is too faint, and it muſt be the pencil of an excellent artiſt, who could do juſtice to the features of us all; the Earl looked as if the attachment of two amiable young people, who had been indulged with each other's unreſerved ſociety near a twelve-month, was a thing that never before happened; and felt, I dare ſay, the utmoſt ſcorn and indignation againſt his daughter, for levelling her mind to the fugitive fortunes of poor Moncraſs; however, he thought proper to conceal his reſentment for the time, and taking his daughter's hand:

Mary, ſaid he, your mother is extremely ill; ſhe has juſt fainted: that poſture would have well become you, had it been aſſumed in prayer for your dying parent.

Never was there a more dutiful child than Lady Mary; never one, who more ſtrictly performed every obligation of duty and affection: the danger of Lady Ruthven baniſhed Moncraſs from her thoughts for a moment——Oh my mother! cried ſhe, why was I not ſummoned to her aſſiſtance?

The ſummons, Mary, would have found you engaged, ſaid the Earl, as he led her out, coldly, and haughtily bowing to Moncraſs, who ſtood the image of deſpondency.

Mr. Butler objected to my leaving him, and I had not the happineſs to ſee Lady Ruthven after we parted: the Earl did not quit his daughter a moment until his veſſel was under weigh: my being preſent at the ſcene he had ſo mal-a-propos interrupted, was certainly ground for ſuſpicion againſt me: he could not, to be ſure,

ſuppoſe me to be very inimical to an affair of which I was ſo tame a ſpectator.

Moncraſs took leave of Lady Ruthven, who prayed for a bleſſing on him; and to the inſtant of their ſeparation, expreſſed the warmeſt ſolicitude for his happineſs.

As ſoon as our dear friends were out of ſight, Moncraſs returned to his lodgings, and I to my chamber——You are, by this time, I preſume, as tired of reading as I am of writing: I beg to preſent, with my daughter's affectionate remembrance, thoſe of, dear ſir, &c.

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

LETTER

LETTER XXIII.

Mr. Harley to Mrs. Butler.

Hermitage.

HOW ſhall I thank you, my good Caroline, for the kind method you have taken to oblige me? or how expreſs my ſenſe of the honor Mrs. Butler condeſcends to confer on me?

You charge me to continue writing, but, dear Caroline, you muſt alſo direct me to a ſubject—Patty Lucas reſts under the green turf—and her woes are no more remembered; I am not in the higheſt ſpirits in the world, nor I believe quite well—my viſits are not ſo frequent at Belle-Vue as they have been—nor—in ſhort I am indiſpoſed—but you muſt have a letter you ſay.

Well then, know that I have lately employed myſelf in directing the gothick library to be finiſhed, which our ever regretted Mrs. Montford began. You remember the point of the rock which overlooks the waterfall; my new building is an octagon, ſo near its ſummit, that when the folding doors are open, the daſhing of the water from the natural caſcade into the reſervoir under, has a ſolemn and pleaſing effect—I have contrived to cut a flight of ſteps from the ſummit of the rock, which carries you ſometimes through the hanging wood, when you may fancy it is a ſubterraneous paſſage; at others, ſo cloſe under the rock,

that the daſhing of the waters expoſes you to an artificial ſhower of rain: thoſe ſteps bring you to an opening, where at once you are ſurpriſed with a moſt beautiful view of the whole vale under the village, juſt where the water makes its way in divided ſtreams from the natural reſervoir; my point of view from hence, and which indeed was my principal object, is Belle-Vue; as the ſmooth current glides along the flowery bank, I havea ſecret pleaſure in reflecting the very ſame water which roars under my cell, gives that charming verdure which refreſhes the ſenſes, and delights the eye in Belle-Vue park and garden, when I retreat from this beautiful ſcene, I reaſcend the ſteps to my new building, which if you pleaſe you may call the cell of contemplation; for there a dead ſilence reigns (ſave the waterfall) which inſpires a ſolemnity, I would not exchange for all the nothings of the great world.

Well, Caroline, how do you like my new building? it is at preſent ſo much in my favour, that I may be almoſt ſaid to live there; my books, globes, muſical inſtruments, laymen figures, and all my drawing apparatus are removed into it, and I am at this inſtant writing to you from thence ——heavens!

A little boy was in the midſt of a bitter complaint againſt his daddy, for getting tipſey, and beating his mammy, for which he was earneſtly praying I would have him put into the ſtocks; when behold, Caroline, through the thick foliage of the grove, which leads from the houſe to my cell, I ſaw, and my ſight ached at her brilliancy, a radiant, an angelic figure! it was robed in white, it ſmiled and beckoned, it was Agnes led by the General.

This,

This, Mr. Harley, is the firſt airing Mademoiſelle has taken ſince her indiſpoſition; ſhe was deſirous of ſeeing the habitation of ſo young a philoſopher: Do you admit female viſitors?——

Certainly, ſir—and I offered to take her diſengaged hand.

To give you a proper idea of my cell, I believe I ſhould have told you the effect it had on the lady before I deſcribed it.——

Heavens! cried ſhe, ſhuddering, and ſtarting back, what dreadful place is this?

I told her it was a new whim, and a very favorite one of mine, that if ſhe would condeſcend to enter, the romantic gloom which diſguſted at firſt appearance, would grow familiar, and I hoped ſhe would like it——

Never, anſwered ſhe, with vivacity—there is a horror—a ſomething repugnant to my feelings in this place, to which I can never be reconciled: let us go, ſir, (to the General) if this be the abode of philoſophy, we will be content to enter the habitations of poor human frailty.

This was affronting my hobby-horſe; I ſaid no more in its defence, but led to your drawing-room.——

Ay, ſaid the General, this is ſomething,—and pray where is the divinity for whom this pretty apartment is fitted up?

I told him it was your's.

While the chocolate was getting ready, Agnes ran over the keys of the organ, I looked a requeſt I could not utter, which the General perceiving begged a ſong?

What charms are there in muſic! and what additional power does the firſt compoſitions receive from the voice of a beautiful female! Did you

you ever obſerve what a ſurprizing echo the room has?——Her voice—but there is no deſcribing it;—I could not only hear, but I could ſee——Have I yet told you the colour of her eyes?—I believe not——they are clear, animated, brilliant hazel; her eye-brows, and eye-laſhes are quite black;—her hair—but take her deſcription from your favorite Italian:

" *In waving ringlets, falls her beauteous hair,*
" *That catch new graces from the ſportive air;*
" *Declin'd on earth, her modeſt look denies*
" *To ſhew the ſtarry luſtre of her eyes;*
" *O'er her fair face, a roſy bloom is ſpread,*
" *And ſtains her ivory ſkin with lovely red:*
" *Soft breathing ſweets, her opening lips diſcloſe*
" *The native odours of the bluſhing roſe;*

* * * * *

" *And Heaven ne'er gave to one of Adam's race*
" *So large a portion of celeſtial grace.*"

Caroline, I wiſh you knew this woman, or rather, I wiſh ſhe was worthy of being known to you—ſhe is, that is ſhe *would be*, were ſhe any other than *what ſhe is*—an angel.

The General, whom I had before acquainted with the fate of Patty Lucas, would walk to the mill, and, for reaſons I very well knew, choſe to go alone. General Moncraſs, ſiſter, is, " The " chearful giver whom the Lord loveth;" and in caſes of benevolence, " lets not his left hand " know what is done by his right,"—he begged I would amuſe Miſs De Courci.

I was

I was never more at a loſs; there were many ſubjects on which I might have entertained her, but my tongue faultered, I actually could not ſpeak, and my embarraſſment encreaſed as I ſaw ſhe was attentively obſerving me. I could not ſtand the ſcrutiny of her mild eyes—for mild, and even tender at that moment they were. I abjure philoſophy, and cannot now reaſon much of cauſes and effects, yet, why I ſhould tremble at her gaze I know not; I have often ſaid I could be content to have my heart, and all its wanderings expoſed to public view—Am I altered? lurks there that within me, hidden, perhaps from myſelf, but open to her penetrating eye, at which I ought to bluſh? how elſe could her look, which is modeſty itſelf, ſo confuſe me?

After a ſilence I had not power to break.

You are a young philoſopher, ſir, ſaid ſhe, and you are de ermined, the General informs me, in oppoſition to the wiſhes of all your friends, to waſte your youth and fine talents in this retirement.

I bowed aſſent.

But do you really conceive, ſir (continued ſhe) enchanting as this place certainly is, it will always be a boundary to your wiſhes?

Again, I could only bow——

Have you no latent deſire to mix with ſociety?—No ambition to gratify? will thoſe ſhades for ever conceal you from the unerring ſhafts of the blind Deity?

Come, Mr. Harley, your friends have been unſucceſful, the General has alſo failed; conduct me through the walks of your fancied elyſium; let us ſee whether I cannot find arguments to prevail on you to quit it, and join the ſocial world.

I retreated from her offered hand.

Ah coward! (ſaid ſhe) you will not truſt yourſelf with me.

I could now ſpeak.

Happineſs and I, madam, have often roved together through thoſe unconſcious ſhades; ſweet peace was our handmaid, and contentment followed our ſteps:——

Heavens! cried Agnes, would you inſinuate that I ſhould interrupt ſuch ſociety? is it impoſſible for you to keep happineſs and me company together.

Are not your deſigns, madam, hoſtile to *my* ideas of what conſtitutes happineſs? and ſhall I be ſo ungrateful as to expoſe my favorite nymphs to ſuch a dangerous enemy?

No, Miſs De Courci! but if you are diſpoſed to endear to my memory the ſhades I love, walk with me through them, unprejudiced by the fallacious reaſonings of a world I diſlike; ſuffer me to be eloquent in their praiſe, let me point to you each ſweet receſs, where the voice of paſſion was never heard, where ambition never entered, and where a right turned mind can never feel a painful ſolitude; if you ſuffer me to do this, I am ready to attend you, but I will not venture to hear *your* lips condemn my retirement; for how then can I ever hope to enjoy the wonted companions of my tranquil hours?

Well, ſir—ſhe heſitated—well, Mr. Harley, then I think we had better not, we will ſtay where we are——

Again ſhe obſerved I was a young philoſopher, a very young philoſopher.

A ſilence enſued, which *ſhe* broke.

Well, Mr. Harley, if you won't let me talk to you, ſhall I ſing?

Would

Would you believe it, I could not anſwer this ſimple queſtion; I could only place a ſeat to the organ, which ſhe accepted and ſung from Handel's Muſic

"*Love ſweet poiſon.*"

It was involuntary, Caroline, I could not help it, I leaned over her chair, and repeated

"*Sweet Harmoniſt, and beautiful as ſweet,*
"*And young as beautiful, and gay as young*"

And, oh ſiſter! the pity of it, the pity of it, that I could not add

"And *innocent* as gay."

The return of General Moncraſs put an end to a viſit, the moſt painful and pleaſing I ever experienced; he preſſed me to return with them to Belle-Vue, I declined his invitation, but have regretted it ever ſince; I cannot bear the retroſpect of my own conduct, it was ſo very ſtupid. Agnes was perhaps offended, I can ſtill leſs bear ſhe ſhould think I could be wanting in reſpect to *her*; ſhe is very amiable, how could I be ſo unaccountably fooliſh? the mortification I feel on this occaſion drives every thing elſe out of my head, what could ſhe think of me; a philoſopher ſhe called me with an emphaſis,—I will certainly go to Belle-Vue to-morrow.

* * * * * *

The boy teazed me to have his daddy put in the ſtocks, his mother now teazes me to forgive him;

him; I begin to be weary of interfering in the fooliſh affairs of the village—would to-morrow were come——

* * * * * * *

I am this inſtant favored with three large packets from the dowager Mrs. Butler; it is arrived at a moſt happy period, my mind is in ſuch a ſtate, I can neither look into myſelf, nor my Hermitage with pleaſure; but I retire with the General and Lady Mary: adieu, Caroline, adieu Butler,

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XXIV.

Mrs. Dowager Butler to Edward Harley.

Soho-Square.

TWO days after the departure of our friends paſt, and I only received enquiries after my health from Moncraſs, on the third he was announced.

The alteration in his countenance during this ſhort period was incredible.

He was pale, dejected, and his words were ſcarcely articulate; he was, he ſaid, returning to his regiment; an opportunity had luckily offered, a ſhip was under ſailing orders for the Brazils, he ſhould commiſſion his agent to ſend after him what neceſſaries he might have occaſion for; he had met Mr. Butler at court, and was now come to wiſh me the health and peace—he ſtopped——

His manner was ſo ſolemn, the ſound of his voice ſo ſad, and his figure ſo intereſting, I could not immediately anſwer him.

He took my hand, and dropping on one knee, preſſed it to his lips, and caſting his fine eyes upwards, whiſpered an ejaculation, in which I could only diſtinguiſh the name of my couſin, then riſing—forgive, madam, the trouble I give you, this packet will explain to you what I cannot; once more adieu; and he left me with ſuch precipitant ſolemnity, it was ſome moments before I could acquire courage to open the papers,

pers, which I found, beſide a ſhort note to me, contained a letter from Lord Ruthven to him, with his anſwer, and from him to Lady Mary, which I incloſe; and as they will together make a tolerable long epiſtle, conclude this from your's,

C. BUTLER.

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

Colonel Moncraſs to Mrs. Butler.

Madam,

THE incloſed copies will inform you of the hard fate of Moncraſs. Amiable friend of the moſt lovely of women, I bid you, perhaps, and indeed moſt likely, an eternal adieu. I tear myſelf from a place that will conſtantly remind me of the treaſure I have loſt. I am not only ſeparated from thoſe dear connections with whom only my ſoul ſought alliance—but hope, the laſt reſort of the wretched, is no more. Your couſin, madam—but I dare not truſt my pen. One only favor can I aſk of you and your worthy huſband:—When in poſſeſſion of the dear bleſſings I can never know—when your heart recognizes your native country—when you again behold the welcome ſcenes of youthful hope—when you are reſtored to the valued ſociety of her *I muſt no more behold*—oh, ſpeak for poor undone Moncraſs; tell that angel, how grateful, how devoted—yet do not only ſay, I am the miſerable

MONCRASS.

INCLOSURE

INCLOSURE I.

Earl of Ruthven to Colonel Moncraſs.

My dear Colonel,

IT is with infinite reluctance I addreſs you on a ſubject, no leſs intereſting to me as a man of rank in the world, than dear to me as a father.

Your amiable qualities, Colonel, rendered you a moſt acceptable gueſt in my family; relying on the unqueſtionable probity of your character, I imprudently introduced you to my only child; was pleaſed at your intimacy with her, and weakly flattered myſelf the congenial ſympathy of two young minds ſo delicately formed, could not poſſibly be productive of any ill conſequence: I left her young heart open to thoſe dangerous impreſſions, which youth are too prone to imbibe, in a conſtant intercourſe with an amiable object of the different ſex: I confided in the integrity of your principles, and forgot the neceſſary guard over the peace of my daughter. The natural conſequence of this blameable conduct in me, is an attachment beginning—which, if not timely checked, will ruin the fortune of my child, without bettering your own.

Suffer

Suffer me, Sir, to hint, with every regard to delicacy, that your preſent unfortunate ſituation, is, with reſpect to your country, unchangeable; and that I never could acknowledge a daughter, wedded to the proſcribed enemy of my prince; you would, therefore, by attaching yourſelf to Lady Mary, involve her in the diſgrace of your ſituation, render her an alien to her family, and natural inheritance; rob me of my only comfort, and end in ſorrow the exiſtence of the Counteſs, who would not ſurvive ſuch an act of ingratitude in you, and diſobedience in her child.—Sanguine hope, youthful paſſion, and the power of beauty, I know, attaches you to my daughter; I give full credit to the diſintereſtedneſs of your principles; and have ſo great a reſpect for your character, that I declare on my honor, young and unprotected as you are, were you any other in reſpect to your native misfortune: I ſhould be proud to raiſe you from obſcurity, and rejoice in ſuch an acquiſition to my family. After having ſaid this, and offered you any thing in my gift, my child only excepted, who, if yours, muſt be totally ruined—need I add any farther entreaties to you, to ſpare me the grief of ſeeing all my hopes blaſted; or would Colonel Moncraſs gratify his own paſſion, at the expence of the intereſt, the honor, and duty of a young creature who loves him?—No! I know him better. He will rather, however hard the ſtruggle, conquer his paſſion; he will write a farewel letter to the innocent, I this morning ſurprized in his arms; he will repreſent to her, how incompatible with her honor, and intereſt, it would be to perſevere in her folly; he will give her to underſtand, that he relinquiſhes all

all claims to her heart; becauſe *her* happineſs is dearer to him than *his own.*

Forgive me, Colonel, for thus dictating to a man, whoſe ſoul is the reſidence of innate honor; ſhould you ever experience a father's fondneſs, you will then know to what exceſs it will carry the mind of man. I am leaving the part of the world where you *are*, and going where you *cannot follow.* I know you are wounded by this ſeparation, and I know your other troubles are doubled by it; yet, you ſee, ſolely occupied by my anxiety for my daughter, I preſume to impoſe a taſk on your feelings, which will add to your diſtreſs; but my confidence is in your ſenſe of juſtice, your regard to propriety, and your unimpeached rectitude: Thoſe will long outlive paſſion. Why, therefore, ſhould not their influence far exceed it?—Yes, my amiable young friend, I know they will; and wherever your future deſtiny may bear you, remember you have in me a warm and zealous friend, who will ever rejoice in your happineſs, and gladly contribute to your proſperity.

Adieu, dear Colonel; Lady Ruthven begs you will accept the incloſed, as a ſlight token of the maternal affection ſhe will always bear you: and we join in every poſſible wiſh for your welfare.

RUTHVEN.

INCLOSURE

INCLOSURE II.

Colonel Moncraſs to the Earl of Ruthven.

Liſbon.

My Lord,

WITH a proper ſenſe of the honors you have conferred on me, I encloſe the requeſted letter to Lady Mary Ruthven.—Yes, my Lord, you are perfectly right; the broken fortunes of ſuch a wretch as Moncraſs, are beneath her acceptance. Nevertheleſs, were I not too well convinced of the certain injury to *her*, of an union with *me*, no power ſhould induce me to forego the firſt and only deſire of my ſoul; but I reſign it, my Lord, not to *you*, not to the *world*—but to *her*.

Lady Ruthven honors me by her friendſhip; ſhe will, however, pardon my returning her favors unopened. I have no doubt of the magnificence of her ſpirit; ſhe has only miſtaken the object. I can owe nothing to the Counteſs, or your Lordſhip, but the reſpect with which I have the honor to be,

My Lord,
Your Lordſhip's
Moſt obedient ſervant,
MONCRASS.

INCLOSURE

INCLOSURE III.

Colonel Moncraſs to Lady Mary Ruthven.

Liſbon.

IF the trembling agitation of my whole frame, ſhould render this addreſs illegible; if the hard leſſon taught by honor, and enforced by prudence, ſhould take from me the power to delineate my feelings—the lovely, and ever beloved Lady Mary, will have the goodneſs to believe—innumerable as may be my other deficiencies—I am ſenſible of none, in my reſpect, my ardent eſteem for her.

Lord Ruthven, Madam, permits me to addreſs you, to bid you a final adieu. But believe, moſt adorable woman, were I not ſelf convinced *your honour*, *your happineſs*, as well as that of your noble parents, were at ſtake; did I not know, that the uniting your fate with an alien to his country, a man, branded with the name of rebel to your prince, whoſe ſcanty and precarious pittance you would be miſerable to ſhare; no power on earth ſhould prevail on me to reſign the dear hope, which lifted to more than mortal joy the ſoul of Moncraſs this happy morning. But, oh, Madam!

dam! it is too ſure, that your certain ruin would be the reſult of your noble preference of ſuch a wretch as myſelf.

I have figured to my imagination, all the probable, as well as poſſible, conſequences of an union, which thrills my ſoul to rapture, while, in ſpite of myſelf, it will float on deceitful fancy. Alas, Lady Mary! there needs not the exaggeration of family intereſt, pride, or parental authority; nor any of the numerous prudential objections, the opinion of the world will juſtify. I *know*, I *feel* I am wretched; but I will not involve you in my miſery. I ſee you at this moment, *mentally*, and imagination ſhrinks appalled from the trial. Deprived of the delicacies, the ſplendour, and even the neceſſaries, you cannot, without injury to your tender conſtitution and figure, give up; and ſhould I bear that graceful form to a country, where my own adoration would teach the unlettered ſavage the power of beauty; how could I hope, in a climate ſo unfavorable to health, with accommodations ſo inadequate to your birth and rank, you would not fall an early ſacrifice to bodily and mental fatigue? You have no conception of the hardſhips which are the companions of my obſcurity; I ſee you droop under the intemperate heat of the ſun; I hear you regret your abſent parents; I feel your tears, even *now* in ſcalding drops on my heart. I confeſs my cowardice—I dare not reduce you to the miſerable level of the wretched

MONCRASS.

LETTER XXV

Mrs. Butler in continuation.

Soho-Square.

MY correſpondence with Lady Mary after our ſeparation was far from being as frequent and unreſerved as it had ever before been. It was Lord Ruthven's pleaſure we ſhould write on mere family affairs—but in this interval I was not unmindful of our abſent friend—Mr. Butler often heard of him—and in two years after his return to the Brazils, we were told from court that he had eſpouſed a young lady, daughter of Don Sebaſtian Lorenzo, governor of the Brazils, by the king's particular deſire, who, as a mark of his approbation, had raiſed the colonel to the rank of general and commander in chief of all his forces in that part of the world.

Lady Ruthven, contrary to the prognoſtics of the medical people, lingered three years after her return to England; what arguments, or whether any were uſed, to efface the tender impreſſions love and Moncraſs had left in the heart of the daughter, I know not—but think it is probable that the vortex of diſſipation in which the Ruthven's were always plunged, the admiration her beauty excited, and the court paid her by all the beau-monde, added to a latent

latent pique the conſequence of the colonel's giving up his hopes in the moment her young heart had reſigned itſelf with all its faculties to him, might by degrees wean her from her firſt attachment without any violent efforts on the part of her parents—and this no doubt the wary Earl foreſaw, when he required ſo hard a ſacrifice from Mr. Moncraſs.

Numerous were the offers of marriage for his lovely daughter, received and rejected by Lord Ruthven; one was not rich enough—another a peer of yeſterday—a third untitled—and the ſpirit of coquetry increaſing with the adulation paid her beauty—Lady Mary became ſtill more difficult to pleaſe than her father, and when I met her by appointment at Montpellier, on my return from Liſbon, where I was ſo unfortunate as to loſe my worthy and beloved huſband, I found her a ſpinſter, with increaſed ſpirits, beauty and health, in her twenty-firſt year—and here, to make you acquainted with the motives which induced her, who had rejected a ducal coronet, to accept the hand of a private gentleman, and one who proved himſelf totally unworthy a preference, that aſtoniſhed the world, I muſt introduce ſome of my own family anecdotes.

Lady Ruthven was the only child of Mr. Neville, of Glouceſterſhire, one of the wealthieſt commoners in England—this gentleman was the elder of three brothers, I am the daughter of the ſecond; Mr. John Neville, the third, was ſo fortunate as to be bleſt with two ſons, which, as the real Neville eſtates were entailed on the male iſſue of the family, rendered the

future proſpects of his children ſuperior to thoſe of his elder brothers.

I had the misfortune to loſe both my parents before I was ſenſible of ſo great a calamity—ſo that, as I before obſerved, I became an orphan ward to Lord Ruthven. Miſs Neville's fortune (although her father was but a life-tenant on the eſtate) was very large, which added to her perſonal graces, rendered her an object of general admiration: Lord Ruthven's heart acknowledged her power, and ſhe accepted his offered hand, before ſhe had attained her eighteenth year, perfectly ſatisfied with the diſpoſition their anceſtors had made of the family eſtate; neither Mr. Neville or his daughter regretted its going to my youngeſt uncle and his ſons—Mr. John Neville was as contracted in his mind as his elder brother was liberal. He watched with eager avidity every turn of his health, and when my uncle Edward died, ſeized the eſtate with ſuch rudeneſs and rapacity, that the agents of Lord Ruthven were barely ſuffered to remove the perſonals from the different ſeats before he took poſſeſſion; a conduct ſo oppoſite to humanity and good breeding, could not fail to confirm the diſlike his narrow mind had long inſpired in Lord Ruthven—and on his part (who was one of the ſtrict abettors of the ſect, then but juſt beginning to eſtabliſh themſelves, called methodiſts, and who held all who were not of his religious opinion in contempt) he conſidered Lord and Lady Ruthven, who lived in great ſplendour and magnificence, as being devoted to perdition, and eſtranged himſelf and family from their connection and ſociety. His elder ſon adopted his conduct and principles—but the younger, who

who was handſome, wild and expenſive, was not to be reſtrained by the examples or commands of his father from viſiting Ruthven-houſe, where he became a great favourite with the Earl, but more particularly with the Counteſs: many were the truant excurſions for which he was ſeverely puniſhed at home—and which owed their origin to the fondneſs of his couſin, who ſupplied his purſe with a liberality bordering on profuſion. And thus, by rendering him independent of his father (who continually reprimanded his ſon and reproached his niece) ſhe became the oſtenſible cauſe of an irreconcileable rupture which happened between them about two years before we went to Liſbon.

The ſmall-pox has been ſo greatly my enemy, you will perhaps ſmile when I tell you the Nevilles were reckoned a remarkably handſome family—Lady Mary you know; Lady Ruthven was I think, ſtill handſomer; and James Neville reſembled *her*, both in perſon and manner; after this, if you had known Lady Ruthven, you would allow it is unneceſſary to add, he was a favourite wherever he appeared, particularly with the ladies.

Too volatile to fix, yet too ſuſceptible of paſſion for every *new* beauty to eſcape the ſhafts of the blind deity—and too clever and ſenſible not to ſucceed in his attempts to render himſelf pleaſing, many were the reputations that were ſacrificed to his inclinations, to his art, and to his vanity. His firſt ambition, on entering into life, was to acquire the character of a *man of gallantry*; and few, who are fond of being ſo *diſtinguiſhed*, chooſe their noble achievements in female ruin ſhould remain untold. In a very ſhort time, ſo eaſy and natural are the progreſ-

ſions of vicious habits, the modern man of gallantry became a confirmed *libertine*, and the more dangerous as he had a head to contrive, and a heart to carry into practice, the moſt cruel machinations againſt *female honour*. Beauty was his purſuit, and innocence his prey.

A gentleman who lived in the neighbourhood of Neville-abbey, of the name of Woodburne, confiding in the integrity and religious principles of my uncle Neville, at his death left him guardian to his two children, a ſon and a daughter.

Miſs Woodburne was young—innocent—and beautiful—attractions, which in the opinion of young Neville, entirely did away the ſacred bond of protection due to an orphan ward of his father's, and of the ſanctuary his roof ſhould have afforded her.

The ſeduction of this young woman, it was not in his power, or indeed in his wiſh, to conceal. But it was neceſſary nevertheleſs he ſhould abſent himſelf awhile from the preſence of an enraged parent.

Young Woodburne was at college when the diſgraceful news reached him, he immediately followed Neville to London, ſent him a challenge, and received his death wound from the ſame hand that had diſhonoured his ſiſter; before I lay down my pen, to drop a tear over the memory of thoſe victims to libertiniſm, I muſt inform you that on the news of her brother's death, Miſs Woodburne fled from the abbey, and was not again heard of till her corpſe was brought by Mrs. Anne Mountford, your late worthy patroneſs, from Briſtol hot-

wells

wells, to be interred in the family vault near her father, at her own laſt requeſt.

Adieu, ſir; this ſimple ſtory will let you completely into the character of Mr. James Neville, and with it I muſt conclude this letter, as I really am at preſent unable to proceed.

C. BUTLER.

LETTER XXVI.

Mrs. Butler in continuation.

Soho-Square.

EVEN this exploit did not loſe Mr. Neville Lady Ruthven's friendſhip and protection. She ſtill partially extolled the few tolerable qualities he poſſeſſed, and excuſed, with more than maternal blindneſs, actions which were condemned by all the reſt of the world.

The whole body of methodiſts, who were by this time become both numerous and powerful, took up the cauſe of young Woodburne, whoſe father, as well as Mr. Neville, was one of the heads of their ſociety; they wrote pamphlets, employed council, and entered into aſſociations, which rendered the proſecution againſt him a matter of too ſerious a nature to be either evaded, or trifled with. He was ſoon apprehended. The violence of party was ſo ſtrong againſt him, and the clamour on account of his barbarity to the ruined female ſo univerſal, it was with great difficulty that he was admitted to bail, when the enormous ſum of ten thouſand pounds was the ſecurity demanded for his liberty.

As the time of his trial approached, totally deſerted by his father, who was among the moſt inveterate of his proſecutors, both Lady Ruthven

ven and himſelf began to dread the event, and their fears encreaſing with the danger, he at length quitted the kingdom by conſent of Lord Ruthven, who generouſly paid the whole ſum of ten thouſand pounds in forfeiture of his recognizance—fond to diſtraction of his lady, every perſon who was dear to her was alſo of importance to him. Money was a thing he never ſet in competition with her happineſs, and ſtill further to indulge her fondneſs for the unworthy fugitive, he agreed to honour his drafts to the amount of two hundred guineas a year, and continued to allow it to him, till ſome events took place which very much reverſed the fortune of Mr. Neville.

My uncle had the mortification to loſe his eldeſt ſon within two years after the Earl's return from Liſbon, ſo that the object of his hatred became the indiſputable heir to his whole eſtate, and fortunate it was for young Neville this event did not happen while the Earl was abroad, for his father's wrath became more irreconcileable, as his power to puniſh him diminiſhed. He conſulted the firſt lawyers in the kingdom, and, miſer as he was in every other reſpect, laid his treaſures before them; the rewards he offered were profuſe; you cannot therefore doubt that the gentlemen of the long robe exerted their utmoſt endeavours to deprive the wanderer of his right; but the rank, the power, and the friendſhip of the Earl of Ruthven, exerted in the cauſe of juſtice, proved of the moſt eſſential ſervice to Mr. Neville: his lordſhip was entirely ignorant on what part of the continent this ſtrange man reſided—his reſidence and man-

ner of conducting himself were enveloped in a myſtery Lord Ruthven felt the leſs inclined to penetrate, as the ſpecimens he had hitherto given of his diſpoſition were ſo very unfavourable, that any new diſcoveries were rather to be avoided than ſought; the only means by which it was poſſible to convey to him an account of the ſtate of his affairs in England, were through a banker at Paris, to whom an expreſs was immediately forwarded, which brought Mr. Neville to England.

Public prejudice is almoſt as unſtable as public favour; time had entirely done away all the aggravating circumſtances attending the ſeduction of Miſs Woodburn, and the conſequent death of her brother, before Neville's return, and the Earl's fortune and intereſt were both ſo ſucceſsfully made uſe of on the trial, that he was honourably acquitted of the murder, and at liberty, if he had choſe it, to continue in his native country.

He was invited by Lord Ruthven to reſide with him till his father ſhould be no more, but he declined making his ſtay then in England, as he had ſome affairs (he ſaid) to ſettle on the continent which would demand his perſonal attendance. Yet gratitude, and politeneſs, in which laſt at leaſt he was by no means deficient, would not permit him to leave his country without paying his devoirs to the Counteſs, who was then very ill at Ruthven-houſe.

He accordingly accompanied the Earl home after the trial, and was met ſome miles from Ruthven by a cavalcade of the Earl's tenants, who paid him this mark of reſpect in compliment to their noble landlord.

At

At Ruthven, the houſe and garden (both of which are magnificent) were illuminated in the moſt ſuperb ſtyle, and the gates thrown open for the entertainment of the populace, whoſe acclamations on the road, the elegant groups who were aſſembled, by invitation, on purpoſe to congratulate him on the happy event of the trial, the viſible tranſport of the dying relation, who had been ſo indulgent to the criminal exceſſes of his youth, and laſtly, the modeſt unaffected welcome of the young and blooming Lady Mary, aſſailing at once a heart ever open to the impreſſions of vanity, and yielding to beauty, who will be ſurpriſed his was conquered by ſuch favour from ſuch objects? his return to the continent was no longer inſiſted on, and all the mighty concerns which prevented his accepting Lord Ruthven's invitation to reſide with the family, ſettled by a ſingle glance from Lady Mary's fine eyes.

Mr. Neville had at various times been captivated with every ſort of beauty, his fickle heart had by turns worn the chains of all that might be eſteemed lovely in woman, but far different were now the ſenſations that filled his ideas to any he had before experienced; he ſaw his couſin, and ſeeing adored her—her beauty inſpired him with a paſſion as new as unconquerable; all that he had hitherto admired in other women, appeared to be united in her; he had ſeen the Venus de Medicis, and admired the brown beauty of that of Colonna, but what were theſe in compariſon with the charming Lady Mary? her wit, at once poignant and pleaſing, and the ſenſibility beaming from her ſparkling eyes, captivated

rivated his underſtanding, as much as her perſonal attractions fired his imagination; then the honours and wealth ſhe was heir to, gratified his utmoſt ambition; here then, at laſt, the wanderer was fixed; here was the magnet which only had power to draw to one point that heart—which had varied to all points of the compaſs.

The evening ball was opened by the two couſins; Lady Ruthven would have it ſo, and ſaw with tears of pleaſure, as ſhe ſat ſupported by pillows in her eaſy chair, the admiration they excited; the day which began in feſtivity, ended in the moſt joyful exhiliaration of ſpirits, and the company ſeparated to their reſpective apartments to court that reſt which was only denied to Mr. Neville.

He had, during his abſence from England, greatly improved his manners and underſtanding, without, I fear, bettering his heart; he threw himſelf on his bed ill enough diſpoſed for ſleep, and abandoned himſelf to reflection; it is true he ſaw the golden fleece within his graſp, but yet difficulties innumerable ſtarted in his way, and vain as he was, the improbables in his preſent purſuit ſtruck moſt forcibly on his mind; for however willing the Earl had been to adopt the partiality of his Lady, he could not help allowing that it was not to be hoped either of them would be ſo prejudiced in his favour, as to diſregard a ſingle point eſſential to the happineſs of their only child, and he had not only to court the affections of a young woman of faſhion, whoſe natural good ſenſe, as well as her familiar intercourſe with the great world, would render her

her no very eaſy conqueſt, but he had alſo to combat with the fixed, and perhaps unfavourable opinion of her parents, who he feared, too probably would conſider the patronizing a wild relation, and the giving him their darling daughter, in two very different lights; but Mr. Neville, although he had, in reſpect to Lady Mary, certainly a heart to love, had alſo, as I before obſerved, a head fertile in contrivance, and *nil deſperando* was his favourite motto; every interview during his ſtay at Ruthven, added to, and confirmed his paſſion for his fair couſin; and had it not been for the conſolation, and hope his remarks on the manners and diſpoſition of the family gave him, he has ſince often declared he would have ended his life at her feet.

Lady Ruthven's unabated fondneſs for him, however, prevented him from having the dreadful ſin of ſuicide added to the long catalogue of his vices; and he, who well knew when to ſeize the yielding moment, threw himſelf at her feet, confeſſed at once his love and demerits, yet pleaded the fond violence of his paſſions, and implored her ſanction to his addreſſing her daughter, in the ſame breath that he vowed not to outlive her rejection.

The ſurpriſe into which this declaration threw her ladyſhip, was no ſooner ſubſided, than the fondneſs ſhe had always felt for her young couſin returned in full force; his paſſion for her beloved child was by no means an unpardonable offence, and ſhe immediately recollected, that as all the great Neville eſtates muſt centre in him, he would by that means be, in point of affluence, the greateſt offer that her daughter had hitherto

hitherto received, nor can it be ſuppoſed that among the agreeables which opened to Lady Ruthven's view on this occaſion, the uniting the wealth of her own family to the ſplendor of her Lord's were forgotten. Mr. Neville was untitled; but would not that circumſtance render his alliance the more acceptable to Lord Ruthven, who was exceſſively attached to his family honours? could their future ſon-in-law poſſibly object to taking the name and title of the Earl, when ſuch noble fortunes would be blended in ſupport of his dignity? Neville had to be ſure been wild, very wild, but his good heart, of which Lady Ruthven entertained no doubt, and his fine underſtanding, which all the world allowed, were unqueſtionable ſureties that his profeſſions of reformation were ſincere.

Thoſe arguments in favour of Mr. Neville's pretenſions, having the ſolid advantage of family intereſt to back them, were no ſooner acceded to by Lady Ruthven, then they were approved of by her Lord, whoſe deſires, wiſhes, and opinions were entirely the reſult of hers.

The declining health and very precarious exiſtence of Lady Ruthven, added to her earneſt deſire to ſee the marriage between the two perſons ſo dear to her take place, furniſhed pleas for bringing the treaty to a ſpeedy concluſion, which Mr. Neville did not fail to turn to his advantage.

You will obſerve, that in no ſtage of this buſineſs were Moncraſs, his pretenſions, or Lady Mary's former attachment to him, mentioned; the match with her couſin was propoſed to her under the avowed ſanction of a dying mother,

the

the approbation of a reſpected and beloved father, the wiſhes of the families on both ſides, excepting only Mr. Neville's father, who ever continued obdurate, and the moſt ardent and reſpectful proteſtations of the inviolable affections of a young man, who had always a ſufficient degree of art to bring his fine perſon and accompliſhments very forward on the canvas, while he had cunning to hide the deformity of his ſoul in the back ground.

Cloaths, equipage, jewels, ſplendour, in poſſeſſion, and titles in reverſion, were the brilliant appendages to this alliance, and having obtained a kind of indolent conſent, extorted rather than given, to her mother's earneſt wiſh from Lady Mary, the lover departed to the continent to ſettle his affairs—poſſibly to get rid of a miſtreſs; and Lady Ruthven, now fonder of life than ever, engaged that herſelf and family ſhould meet him at Montpelier; but death, the long expected finale to that Lady's excurſions, put a period to her exiſtence within a few days after Mr. Neville left England.

And now, having taken up the pen to oblige my daughter, I would wiſh her, as thank heaven, ſhe is recovered, to reſume it, and purſue the hiſtory of Lady Mary Neville; but the encroacher begs me to bring it down to the preſent time; and as ſhe poſſeſſes in a very full degree the power of carrying every point with me, I ſhall, in a poſt or two, proceed in my narrative; and deſire you will, in the mean time, rank in the number of your warmeſt friends, yours,

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

LETTER

LETTER XXVI.

Mrs. Butler in continuation.

Soho-Square.

LADY Ruthven's death plunged the Earl, who tenderly loved her, into ſuch an exceſs of grief, that it was feared he would not long ſurvive her; Lady Mary was alſo extremely affected; but young minds have ſo much to hope in the future, and thoſe of the Earl's experience and time of life ſo little, that there was all the difference in the world of their manner of feeling the death of the Counteſs: The Earl's grief grew ſtronger as Lady Mary's gave way; time, by degrees, weaned her memory from a mother who was always either an invalid, or immerſed in diſſipation, while it perpetually repreſented to his the ſweet companion of his youth, the woman he eſteemed, the wife he adored; and his nervous ſyſtem ſuffered ſo much, that it was now neceſſary, on account of *his* health, the Montpellier journey ſhould be taken.

Mr. Neville heard with extreme regret of the loſs he had ſuſtained; he haſtened with a mixture of anxiety and fear, to Montpellier, where he waited, as you may imagine, with great impatience the commands of Lord Ruthven.

Lady Mary felt little inclination towards the completion of her engagements; but what was a father's

father's advice *only*, while her mother lived, was now ſhe was no more, an abſolute command: he flew into tranſports of grief, and paſſion, at the remoteſt hint of her wiſh to evade, or delay the injunctions of his beloved wife; and perhaps a ſuſpicion that ſhe intended to protract, if not wholly avoid the marriage, hurried their journey to the continent, where, as I before ſaid, I, by their deſire, met them; and in eight days after our arrival the marriage was celebrated with the utmoſt privacy, on account of our recent loſs: Our mourning was laid aſide one day in compliment to the living, and it was reſumed the next in reſpect to the dead.

The evening preceding her marriage, I received a ſummons to attend the bride in her private apartment.

My own heart was ſo oppreſt with ſorrow, and I was at that time ſo ill qualified to comfort others, that I was ſatisfied it was in kindneſs to me Lady Mary had diſpenſed with my company in her hours of retirement. It was, however, ſo natural for a young perſon on ſuch an intereſting occaſion, to wiſh for a companion of her own ſex, that I was not ſurpriſed at her meſſage.

I found her penſively looking at a miniature which ſhe held in her hand; ſhe motioned to a chair without ſpeaking, and, when I was ſeated, turned the face of the picture towards me, when I diſcovered, with aſtoniſhment, it was Moncraſs.

It is (ſaid ſhe, deeply ſighing) three years ſince I ſaw this obdurate face; I am now on the point of avowing love and obedience to another. I ſent for you, dear Conſtance, to indulge myſelf in the ſad pleaſure of ſpeaking, for the laſt time, of that

unfortunate

unfortunate man—does he yet exiſt?—have you ever heard any tidings of him?—does he? but do not tell me if he does; it is now too late; were I convinced I yet held a place in his heart, for me to think of him with innocence—you are ſurpriſed—you thought the various ſcenes of diſſipation, and pleaſure, in which I have been engaged, the number of men who have affected to ſigh for me, and his cruel adherence to rectitude, had eraſed him from my memory; you are miſtaken; all ſenſe of delight muſt be dead in my boſom, when it ceaſes to throb at the ſight of this picture: all power to diſtinguiſh between right and wrong loſt, when I forget his honor, his misfortunes, and his ſelf-denial; it was not a common attachment could give me courage to offer myſelf to his acceptance: No! Conſtance—nor was it a common object who inſpired that attachment. I ſaw the young hero ſuperior to misfortune; he had loſt his family honors, and inheritance—but his firm ſoul was all itſelf, and the chief of the firſt houſe in Scotland, dignified the paltry promotion which he had more than earned: when I felt my heart involuntarily ſpring to his melting eyes, it was not merely to the object of my choice; it was to the brave man ſtruggling with adverſity—to the hero, whoſe fame ſhould have reached the heavens; his rejection of me, which this letter contains, would have drawn me after him to the verge of the earth, had I been in poſſeſſion of an independent fortune; but certain my father would never receive a proſcribed rebel for his ſon—that my mother's heart would have broken, and that I ſhould not only incumber his narrow circumſtances, but perhaps, by uniting my fate to his, draw the further vengeance of

providence

providence on his guiltleſs head, for taking a parricide to his heart; what could I do but give him up? and now, my dear Conſtance, anſwer my firſt queſtion: does he exiſt?

My huſband, I told her, had made conſtant enquiries after him, and we had the pleaſure to hear he was in health, but, I added, he had not wrote to us.

Well, ſaid ſhe, concealing a falling tear with the picture, I rejoice he is well, but—ſhe heſitated and bluſhed—and after a pauſe proceeded: 'Has there not been a report, a kind of whiſper'—and her agitation was ſo great, her voice, imperceptibly to herſelf, dropped ſo low, I could but juſt hear her articulate—'that he is married.'

As ſhe had not before mentioned the name of Moncraſs, I had not thought it proper, on my part, to revive a ſubject I had every reaſon to ſuppoſe ſhe had ceaſed to remember. But now, that the manner in which ſhe made her enquiry, convinced me ſhe had ſtill an intereſt in the fortunes of Mr. Moncraſs, I was about to inform her of every particular that had reached us concerning his marriage; but as ſoon as I had confirmed the report ſhe had heard—Enough—enough (cried ſhe) with quickneſs, if he is but happy and content—ſhe ſtopped, and gave vent to a guſh of tears, and with an affecting dignity in her manner—this picture, couſin, (ſaid ſhe) no matter how I came by it—it coſt me ſome pains, and expence; and this letter, you remember it.—

It was that the Colonel ſent her at parting.—'They are very dear to Mary Ruthven; but, Mary Neville ſhould be a ſtranger to the emotions they occaſion; take therefore the dear, dangerous reliques; do not deſtroy them, but if you outlive me, and can do it with propriety, lay them on my

my boſom;—let them be buried with me; and then preſſing them to her lips, and to her heart, ſhe gave them into my poſſeſſion, and after affectionately embracing me, retired to her cloſet. I ſaw her no more till ſhe was attired for the altar next morning, when ſhe gave her hand to Mr. Neville.

Never have I ſeen in any man ſuch an unbounded, ſuch a frantic joy, as that which appeared to agitate the bridegroom, both during the ceremony, and after it was concluded. The whole of his behaviour indeed, from the inſtant the indiſſoluble knot was tied, to the moment when it pleaſed God to call him to himſelf, ſavoured of inſanity.

It was the intention of the Earl, and his daughter, to winter at Montpellier; but the ſpirit of Neville might be truly ſaid to be a perturbed one: ever reſtleſs and diſſatisfied; a ſuperſtitious perſon would certainly ſay the injured ghoſts of young Woodburne and his ſiſter, haunted him; many of the diſmal relations every country village abounds in, had not, I dare to ſay, half ſuch apparent grounds for their origin.

Neville hated, he ſaid, Montpellier; he longed to retire into Rutlandſhire, where the Earl had preſented him with the fine old ſeat, where you was firſt introduced to Lady Mary; nor would he ſuffer them to reſt till he carried his point, in ſeparating his wife from her father.

I have great reaſon to believe the Earl very early ſaw the wretched choice the Counteſs and himſelf had made for their child; yet, when I conſider his haughty temper, I cannot ſufficiently admire the patience, and forbearance of his conduct to Neville; he endeavoured by gentle, and perſuaſive

ſive means, to ſoothe the ſavage ferocity of a temper, which ought, in common policy, to have been ſubſervient to him; and when he found *that* impoſſible, always took care to let his giving up his own wiſh, appear like the conſequence of a conviction that he was wrong, in order to avoid any thing that might lead to future altercations; but every day's experience of Neville's unhappy diſpoſition, added to the anxiety of his mind; would, I really believe, have put an end to his life, had he not ſuffered himſelf to be perſuaded to ſubmit to the ſeparation ſo ardently deſired by Neville.

As to Lady Mary—when her huſband broke out into paſſions that transformed him to a fury, which, after he had once dropt the maſk, happened on the moſt trivial occaſions—I have ſeen her ſtand aghaſt; cold ſhivering fits would ſeize her whole frame, the blood forſook her cheeks, and, till relieved by a ſhower of tears, ſhe would look the picture of deſpair.

Then his tranſports would be as violent another way; he fell at her feet, addreſſed her by the moſt endearing epithets; wept himſelf; laid the blame on the climate, the place, and the people; all of whom he deteſted. In England all would be well—

To England then go, ſir, ſaid the Earl, after one of thoſe extraordinary ſcenes; but beware how you continue to give way to the wicked violence of your temper; Lady Mary's life ſhall not be ſacrificed to a lunatic. Alarmed at this threat, he affected a perfect reſignation to the will of Lord Ruthven; in a moment, the harmony of his features returned; he entreated pardon, promiſed to ſubdue his paſſions, and for fourteen days

days after, (we were no longer together) he was the humble, the inſinuating Neville, we had ſeen him before his marriage.

Lady Mary wiſhed me to ſtay with her father at Montpellier; his Lordſhip, as earneſtly preſſed me to accompany his daughter; and my own inclinations bent towards England, where my eldeſt ſon, (whom I had not ſeen almoſt from his birth) was under the care of his grandmother; but Lord Ruthven's ill ſtate of health ſo affected his amiable, (and as ſhe ſcrupled not to call herſelf to me) his miſerable daughter, that I relinquiſhed my own deſire to return home, in compaſſion to her: I ſaw how her affectionate heart hung on her father, how ſevere the conflict between duty to her huſband, and filial fondneſs for a beloved parent; what! ſaid ſhe, claſping my neck, is it not enough, his child—her whoſe whole life would have been too happy, ſpent in the delightful offices of ſoothing his painful hours, and attending his ſick couch, ſhould be torn from his dear parental arms, but muſt every body deſert him? Oh! my good couſin, if ever I was dear to you, ſtay with my father; it will be a comfort to me, when, perhaps, I may have no other.

Ah! my poor couſin, thought I, thy comforts are reduced to a very narrow compaſs. I complied with her entreaties, and it is now a great ſatisfaction to me that I did ſo. The poor Earl was very near ſinking under the ſorrows of his heart, and the diſorders of his body; we ſtaid two years on the continent, rambling from air to air, at the diſcretion of our phyſicians, and then returned to England; the Earl much mended in health, but diſtracted at the accounts we heard from

from others, for Lady Mary never complained of her wretchedneſs, and Neville's villainy.

To trace this bad man through all the extravagancies of his conduct, would be to revive the moſt diſtreſsful periods of my life, without entertaining you.

That Neville loved his wife to a degree of adoration, I will not deny; but it was the love of Herod for his Mariamne; it was rage, fury, and ſuſpicion; a glance of common civility, marked the perſon on whom it was beſtowed for hatred and revenge; he inſiſted on her confining herſelf to her apartments, firſt at Belle-Vue; and after his father's death, at Neville-abbey; he allowed her no ſociety, and even her books were often in his mad fits taken away. She loves not me he would ſay; I know I am the object of her hatred; ſhe delights not in my ſociety, I am a baſiliſk to her eyes; and ſhall I, who doat on her, ſuffer her to know pleaſure when I am on the rack? no, I am miſerable, let her be alſo wretched. Wicked wretch! how impotent was thy malice? my friend found that reſource in her boſom, conſcience denied thee: "She received his injuries with "all the calm fortitude of heroic patience; ſhe "firmly relied that providence would either "put an end to her misfortunes, or ſupport her "under them; and with that animating hope, "ſhe ſeemed to feel leſs for herſelf, than for the "author of her ſufferings."

Lord Ruthven, leſs patient than his unhappy daughter, often vainly implored her to leave the barbarian, and put herſelf under his protection; and after bearing ſome years with Neville's atrocious behaviour, merely to enjoy the ſad privilege of weeping over his lovely child two or

three

three times in the year, worn out at length with vexation, and unable to prevail on her to ſeparate herſelf from her unworthy huſband, he gave up that poor conſolation, and retired to Ruthven-houſe. I muſt not omit informing you, Miſs Julia Neville was born in the firſt year of thoſe inauſpicious nuptials.

I defy any one to account for it, for Neville never gave a reaſon for any of his freaks; but I, who deteſted him, was ſomehow in tolerable eſtimation with him. But the utmoſt advantage I could make of his favour, was to prevail on him to ſuffer me to ſpend one month with my couſin every year; during that whole period, the man was in agonies; he could not bear we ſhould be a moment alone together; fearing, as he confeſſed, I ſhould inform her of ſome nonſenſe the world might report concerning him.

The world was, indeed, pretty well informed; but I was too much intereſted in the peace of Lord Ruthven and my friend, to repeat to either what I could not help hearing. There was nothing vile in man, which common fame did not impute to him. Innumerable were the ſtories circulated of his conduct, both towards his wife and many others; ſome true, and (as is generally the caſe) ſome falſe. Nay, it was once confidently ſaid, a young foreigner followed him to England, and claimed him as her lawful huſband; but the matter, after making a great noiſe, was ſuddenly huſhed up, nobody knew how.

For my own part, I believed him capable of any thing, where he was ſure of his own ſafety: For when any danger immediately threatened himſelf, there did not breathe a more abject ſpirit; and yet he was, at his outſet in life, ſaid not

not to want courage;—but vice, my dear Sir, is a great enervator of the ſoul.

Lady Mary continued her exemplary conduct to the laſt; never did a fonder mother exiſt. Her obedience to the will of her huſband was implicit; but it was the obedience of principle, not affection; and was accompanied with a cold and frigid ſolemnity, which enraged Neville more than oppoſition or perverſeneſs could have done. I have often heard him ſwear, if ſhe would take the trouble to contradict him, he ſhould be happy—ſhe never did.

At length, after ſpending the bloom of his life, in rendering himſelf terrible to his family, hateful to ſociety, and contemptible to the world, he took cold by plunging into a river, as he was endeavouring to eſcape from his own gamekeeper, who had caught him in the act of ſeducing his wife; the man either did not, or *pretended* he did not know who the delinquent was, but purſued him to the brink of the river with an oaken towel, which in the chace he had freely uſed:—The water was both deep and rapid, and his career of wickedneſs had been then ended, had he not called aloud on his ſervant to ſave his maſter, in the hearing of ſeveral paſſers by, who ran to his aſſiſtance, and preſerved him from immediate death. But the effect of this accident, if it might be ſo called, was, though ſlow, equally ſure; the cold fixed on his lungs, an inflammation followed, which terminated in what is called a galloping conſumption.

The horrors of his conſcience, and the death-bed retroſpect of an ill-ſpent life, were in Mr. Neville ſo truly terrible, ſo ſhocking to humanity, that I haſten from the recollection of a ſcene

from which affrighted nature recoils. My couſin, at his deſire, ſent for me to *comfort him*; poor wretch! had I not a ſtronger motive, ſo much did I abhor him, I really believe I ſhould have rejected his ſummons.

The next extraordinary act of the unaccountable Neville, was to ſend for his wife to his bedſide, and there ſolemnly entreat ſhe would comply with a requeſt, on which his preſent and eternal peace, he ſaid, depended; which he conjured her for the ſake of his Julia, who was weeping by her, not to refuſe.

The end of this man was ſo unlike every other perſon I had ſeen in that awful ſituation—one felt ſo *much* terror, and ſo *little* regret, that all the ſoftening and forgiving powers of a death-bed influence were annihilated. Loſt in the horror of the ſcene, the ſweetneſs of Lady Mary's diſpoſition, and his adjurations for the ſake of her child, would certainly have prevailed on her to obey him, had I not been preſent; I bid him name his wiſh before he extorted her promiſe to fulfil it. He gave me a look—and finding ſhe declined anſwering, informed us, his modeſt requeſt was, that ſhe would promiſe never to marry—ſhe was ſilent.—Ah! ſaid he, groaning, too well I know you will; Moncraſs, your beloved Moncraſs will be your huſband; you ever hated Neville!—Oh! Mary, promiſe me, that the curſed Moncraſs ſhall not be your choice; I leave you the whole world beſide—Oh! promiſe, promiſe!—

The name of Moncraſs was an electrical ſhock to us both; we looked at each other for information. It was long ſince I had even thought of him. He had not once, ſince her marriage, been the

the ſubject of our inquiry or converſation; nor had we an idea Neville knew, or had ever heard of him.

Moncraſs! cried Lady Mary—ah! where is he, does he yet exiſt?

Barbarous! anſwered Neville, is it thus you obey your huſband?—thus you comply with my dying injunctions?—Between conſternation and terror, Lady Mary ſunk into my arms.

Ah! cried he, as the intervals of pain and weakneſs ſuffered him to ſpeak, revive, my deareſt Mary; my poor, injured—He could then ſay no more, the hiccup and convulſions came on—Pray for me—pity me——Oh! had I not loved as never mortal loved, the horrors of this moment had been ſpared me!——And then—but why ſhould I ſhock my nature or yours with the frightful deſcription—he died the ſame evening. Oh! may none of our latter ends be like his.

C. Butler.

LETTER XXVIII.

Mrs. Butler in continuation.

Soho-Square.

WHEN I left Groſvenor-ſtreet, my daughter deſired I would take the firſt convenient opportunity to finiſh the hiſtory of General and Lady Mary Moncraſs. I was ſorry to underſtand from her you were indiſpoſed; but hope this letter, if it does not find you perfectly recovered, will, as you ſay you are ſo much intereſted in the ſtory, be a means of diſpelling for a while the ennui of your very ſolitary life.

What I have further to ſay will not take up ſuch an enormous pacquet as the laſt—You may believe it is no ſmall grief to me to reflect, that ſome other biographer may have to conclude the remarkable occurrences of my friend's life when I am perhaps no more. It is, indeed, very diſtreſſing to me, who have known and felt with my friend, all her hopes and fears, when providence has removed every obſtacle to her happineſs, to ſee that any ſhould ariſe from the wickedneſs

edneſs of man—more wounding to her peace than all that has paſt; could my hiſtory have left her in the quiet enjoyment of the felicity, ſhe ſo eminently deſerves, I ſhould conclude it with pleaſure: yet, if "whatever is, is right," why ſhould we murmur?

Lord Ruthven, you will conclude, was not long before he embraced his daughter; his youth appeared to be renewed, and he bore the fatigue of travelling poſt two hundred miles, without once getting out of his carriage, with the ſpirit of five-and-twenty—Lady Mary flew to him—I am reſtored to my father, cried ſhe, and fainted in his arms.

My daughter, ſaid the Earl, as ſhe recovered, what haſt thou not ſuffered!—how dear has thy obedience coſt thee! But never more will I attempt to bias the inclination of my child—never oppoſe the wiſh of her heart; that heart, where patience, fortitude and honor have their reſidence, cannot feel an improper impulſe. Thy will, my daughter, ſhall in future be thy father's. Need I ſay that in this hour of heartfelt gratulation, I alſo had my ſhare of the good Earl's kindneſs?

We left Lord Ruthven at the abbey, who undertook to appoint proper people to ſettle Mr. Neville's affairs, and ſet off in his carriage to Ruthven, where we continued until the Earl joined us.

The ſtrange man could not be perſuaded to make a will; he had lived in ſuch a contracted way, that he had not ſpent the tenth of his income. And what was very odd, and will ſerve to ſhew you the extreme abſurdity of his character, although his domeſtic affairs were conducted with great parſimony, there were many

thouſand pounds in each of his ſtewards hands, which had been ſuffered to accumulate from year to year without intereſt, from the time he came into the Neville eſtates until his death; his perſonals were therefore very large; but the eſtates paſſed to a diſtant branch of the family in right of male inheritance; theſe matters were ſoon adjuſted, and in a few months we conſidered the paſt troubles merely as foils to our preſent happineſs; we divided our time between Ruthven and Belle-Vue, and I knew not of a wiſh my couſin had ungratified.

It was during one of our excurſions to the latter place when my eldeſt ſon, who was then on a viſit to you, and his brother, came to pay his reſpects to Lady Mary.

Conſtance, ſaid ſhe, ſmiling, it is time Edward ſhould go abroad; it would certainly raiſe a laugh were we to travel in his ſuite; but (again ſmiling) we might give him the meeting.——Edward was in raptures at the idea.

Young men, I believe, ſeldom take Portugal in their tour, continued Lady Mary.—Why not, Madam, (ſaid Edward) if to form a proper judgment of men and manners, be the object of the grand tour, why ſhould Portugal be paſſed by? —Nay, I know not, replied Lady Mary, and turning to me, I ſhould think, couſin, ſome uſeful diſcoveries, or at leaſt obſervations, might be made even in the Brazils.

Agreeable ones, Lady Mary, I allow, anſwered I; but as to their uſe, you will pardon me.——Do not be a prude in your old age, couſin, ſaid ſhe, I am reſolved to be a traveller in mine.

I ſuſpect

I ſuſpect as much *now*—but as Edward ſays, Portugal may lie in the way of the grand tour; and, as in that caſe, we may as well begin as end there. Why not ſend him to reconnoitre? A good general, couſin, will always know the ſtate of the country through which he is to make his way——And a ſmart aid-du-camp, interrupted Lady Mary, is no bad acquiſition to the moſt experienced commander; but a thought has juſt ſtruck me will do better than ſending this poor lad in queſt of adventures for me, when, in all probability, he fancies himſelf perfectly qualified to fight windmills, and relieve diſtreſſed damſels on his own account.

Lady Mary was not quite ſo ingenuous in this matter as I had always found her—for the truth is, the thought had *not juſt* ſtruck her; it had been long planned and digeſted, and only waited a proper period to be put in execution. You, Mr. Harley, muſt remember an abſence of your worthy tutor for ſome months; he was, I need not tell you, a man of ſtrict morals, and ſolid underſtanding.

Mrs. Montford was one among the many who paid their reſpects to Lady Mary on her return to Belle-Vue; ſhe had been honored in her younger days with the friendſhip of the Ruthven family, when they occaſionally viſited that part of the world, and ſhe was now particularly anxious to obtain the patronage of her ladyſhip for you. My daughter Butler, her niece, was alſo at that time under her protection; I perfectly remember her bringing you both with her, attended by Mr. Allen, to the old houſe where now Belle-Vue ſtands.

Mrs. Montford was one of thoſe ladies who kept up the credit of a ſingle life, by her urbanity and good temper; ſhe became ſuddenly a prodigious favorite with Lady Mary: and at laſt it came out—that the reſult of all their cloſetings, was the commiſſion my couſin gave Mr. Allen to go to Liſbon in purſuit of Moncraſs; he was now in waiting for his final inſtructions; and as ſoon as ſhe had concluded her laſt (and as it proved introductory ſpeech) ſhe directed a ſervant to inform Mr. Allen ſhe wiſhed to ſee him.

He immediately appeared, and being furniſhed with proper credentials, began his journey to Liſbon the next morning;—his commiſſion was to make every poſſible inquiry reſpecting Colonel Moncraſs—his circumſtances—ſituation in life—but above all his domeſtic engagements. We returned as ſoon as he had departed to Ruthven; and there waited with no ſmall impatience on the part of Lady Mary the reſult of his inquiries.

Our firſt letter from Allen informed us, that the General was returned to Liſbon, older, and perhaps wiſer, but not richer, than when in his youth he had left it—with the addition of a young ſon to educate and provide for out of his pay.

Moncraſs had loſt his wife in bringing her ſon into the world, within the firſt year of their marriage: Don Sebaſtion, her father, a hale widower of fifty-ſix, after his daughter's death, took it into his head to ſupply her place, by taking a young bride—when an old man once adopts a whim of this kind, he is ſeldom over-nice in his choice—a buxom laſs, daughter to one of his ſubalterns, happening to ſtrike his fancy, he honoured her with his hand—and ſhe, in return, brought him heirs in plenty to his large fortune;

whom

whom ſhe took care ſhould not only inherit the governor's riches, but alſo engroſs his affections —and thus was poor Moncraſs and his ſon cut off from all expectations from Don Sebaſtion.

The General, diſguſted at this treatment from the governor, his health impaired by the climate, and tired of a ſituation, where his honor would not ſuffer him to grow rich, applied for a recal; and our inquirer found him at a ſmall village within a few leagues of Liſbon, where ſome other fugitive families, his countrymen, who had alſo been in the Portugueſe ſervice, were ſettled; living with great frugality, and ſupplying to his ſon the place of a tutor, he had not ability to pay.

Lady Mary inſtantly diſpatched the incloſed letter, which, with its anſwer, will render this a tolerable large packet—I ſhall therefore take the opportunity of cloſing it, and am yours affectionately,

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

LETTER XXIX.

Lady Mary Neville to General Moncraſs, incloſed in the preceding.

Ruthven-houſe.

My dear General,

THIRTEEN years are now elapſed ſince the moſt generous of men rejected the affectionate heart of Mary Ruthven; I have the letter he then wrote, now before me; *my honor, my happineſs*, and that of my parents, were pleas that were offered—in oppoſition to the feelings of his own heart—to the fondneſs of mine—thoſe pleas, he told me, were founded on the everlaſting rule of right, from which *I* well knew *he* would not deviate—Oh! thou miſtaken caſuiſt—could the fate, which thy unrelenting obſtinacy expoſed me to, have been known to thee—the days—years of ſorrow I have endured—the inſults and indignity I have ſuffered—loſt to the bleſſings of mutual affection, to the joys of ſociety; and to the endearments of my honored parent—a captive in the land of freedom—wedded to a man my heart abhorred—while every tender ſentiment of my ſoul floated (though hopeleſs) on fancy's airy pinions in purſuit of thee—couldſt thou have known this, at a time when thy ſympathy *would* not condole, and *could* not relieve me; if I know thee, Moncraſs—and I think

think I do, thy anguiſh would have been inſupportable—but it is paſt—and my heart, my unalienable heart, which abandoned by thee, has, by turns ſwelled with grief, and ſunk in deſpair, now ſeeks repoſe with thine.

Wealth, I know General Moncraſs will deſpiſe, he is indeed *above* it; but he once feared to reduce his Mary to his fortunes—ſhe exults it is now in her power, with conſent of her father, to raiſe him to hers. He is an alien to his country. What is country but a name? a ſound, a nothing. Are not the bounteous fruits of the ever-teeming earth every where diſpenſed?—do not the dews of heaven fall, and one juſt God reign over the whole creation?—the country of a virtuous man is that where he can live, with leaſt offence to his maker, and moſt benefit to his fellow creatures; and as to me, what are climes, country, kindred, to the poſſeſſion of the man I love? ſay, then, Moncraſs, will you, *now at laſt*, all ſtorms ſubſided, and peace within our reach, accept your Mary's once more offered hand? invite her to your retirement—ſay but ſhe will be welcome—and believe her already on the wing to him who has ever been the *firſt* and *laſt* hope of

MARY NEVILLE.

LETTER

LETTER XXX.

General Moncraſs to Lady Mary, in anſwer.

Liſbon.

WHAT ſhall I ſay to you, moſt lovely, and moſt beloved of women? how reconcile you to yourſelf, for having made the noble and generous offer your letter contains? or to the wretched Moncraſs for rejecting it? Ah! my adored Mary, were then thy beauty, thy innocence, and thy virtue, ſacrificed to one, whoſe barbarous heart was not congenial to thy own? who knew not, felt not, the power of thy faſcinating graces? and did thy wounded, thy dejected ſoul, turn in tenderneſs to the unfortunate Moncraſs?—ſweet flatterer! ever charming friend! I am unequal to the taſk which honor impoſes—how dare I tell the woman I have ever adored, ſhe muſt forget I exiſt? how much leſs, dare I rob her family, and her country, of their brighteſt ornament? bring a woman of rank—and *ſuch* a woman! to aſſociate with a ſet of ruined fugitives; live on her bounty—and accept from her a fortune, which my cruel deſtiny diſables me from returning; and what is of the laſt importance, entail diſgrace on her poſterity. It muſt not be—yet believe him, who has yet

to

to learn the art of deceit, I love—I adore you, even more than ever—were I a prince, with what pride would I invite my Mary to my arms; poor, undone, and fugitive as I am, I yet want reſolution to bid you forget me.—No—madam—let me yet live in your memory, though fate for-ever ſeparates you from

MONCRASS.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

Mrs. Butler in continuation.

Soho-Square.

I Will ſuppoſe you have read General Moncraſs's heroic billet, for it could ſcarce be called a letter, which we had no ſooner done, than it was toſſed into the fire, and as quickly reſcued from the flames.

Did ever any body know any thing ſo vexatious? cried Lady Mary, burſting into tears—but I am determined to conquer his proud ſpirit; and after half an hour's converſation with the Earl, during which both our abigails and myſelf were in a violent buſtle—we ſet off under the eſcort of my ſon to Falmouth, where we fretted away a fortnight waiting for wind; at laſt that ſerved, and we had a fine paſſage to Liſbon.

We went immediately to the hotel, where Mr. Allen waited to hear from us; and the next morning, proceeded to the reſidence of Moncraſs.

We found the General ſitting under the ſhelter of ſome vines, with his ſon; to whom he was reading Fitzoſborne's letters, and was in the moment we approached him at the part of that tender one to Cleora:

"It

"It is impoſſible, I perceive, to turn off the "mind at once from an object which it has long "dwelt upon with pleaſure; my heart, like a "poor bird hunted from her neſt, is ſtill return-"ing to the place of its affections; and after "ſome vain efforts to fly off, ſettles again, where "all its cares, and all its tenderneſs are center-"ed."

At the concluſion of the letter, he laid down the book, and appeared to be loſt in reflection.

I thought him much altered; he was ſunburnt: his hair, which was undreſſed and out of powder, was in many places changed, from a fine gloſſy black to grey; the extreme brilliancy of his eyes, were changed, though not leſs pleaſing, to a ſwimming melancholy, his figure retained its former grandeur, but there was alſo an intereſting penſiveneſs in his whole appearance.

Vanity will certainly keep its reign in the heart of a woman, as long as it is ſenſible of the tender paſſion; Lady Mary had taken uncommon pains in the decoration of her perſon; ſhe was then in her thirty-firſt year, a little inclined to the enbonpoint, and allowing (as Hewſon ſays) for alterations, as lovely as ever. She trembled and changed colour, as we obſerved him,—inſomuch, that I was alarmed for her; and my emotion diſturbed him—he ſtarted—and perceiving a group of ſtrangers, was approaching us with a polite reſpect; but recollecting me, he again ſtarted with ſurpriſe, and again came forward; but though his eyes darted a joyful welcome, he paſſed me without ſpeaking.

Lady

Lady Mary, as ſhe told me afterwards, felt in that moment for the dignity of her ſex; her conduct, in thus purſuing the General, was a kind of retrograde motion, that then diſpleaſed herſelf; and ſhe had ſat down, overcome with ſhame, at the foot of a tree, half fainting, hardly able to wipe the falling tear from her eye.

The General did not ſee her at firſt, but the moment he knew me, his heart informed him who was near, and guided him to her feet.

This interview beggared deſcription, his kneeling poſture was ſoon changed to a more endearing one; he ſupported her into his plain, but elegant houſe; and in fine, before ſun-ſet, the heroiſm of ſelf-denial was no more; romance kicked out of doors, and Lady Mary Neville metamorphoſed into Lady Mary Moncraſs.

The Earl ſoon joined us, with Julia; who was two years younger than Reuben, the General's ſon; and I then left the happy groupe, to return to my own affairs in England, where, in two years, I had the ſupreme felicity of meeting them again; his majeſty having been graciouſly pleaſed to take off the attainder againſt thoſe unfortunate gentlemen, the wandering deſcendants of thoſe who had been in actual rebellion, and alſo reſtored to them their confiſcated eſtates: the General therefore, now in poſſeſſion of his natural inheritance, the weight of obligation removed from his mind, and no longer depending on the fortune of his lady, whoſe pride it was nevertheleſs to inveſt him with

with it; had begun to taſte the ſweets of real felicity, or acted it extremely well, when the event happened which has entirely deſtroyed the peace, and will, I fear, ultimately prey on the *life* of my friend. And we perceive, ſir, in her fate, the vanity of all human foreſight; two people whom kingdoms and ſeas could not divide, now agree on a voluntary ſeparation; but I muſt do the General juſtice, however changed he may be in other reſpects, his noble, independant ſpirit, is ſtill the ſame. He has declined retaining any part of Lady Mary's fortune, and even refuſed to reſide in the houſe he rebuilt in your neighbourhood, though he is very partial to the ſituation, on any other terms but that of paying an equivalent for the ground on which it ſtands.

I believe, ſir, I have now ſatisfied your curioſity, and fulfilled my daughter's deſire, in reſpect to General Moncraſs and my couſin: ——ſhould any thing have eſcaped me, which you wiſh to be further informed of, I ſhall be very ready to reſume the ſubject, and am, ſir, &c.

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

LETTER

LETTER XXXII.

Edward Harley, Eſq. to Mrs. J. Butler.

Hermitage.

YESTERDAY, oh! my dear friends, the enchanting yeſterday, I ſet off for Belle-Vue, after a very reſtleſs night, during which I had framed many apologies for my conduct to Agnes, but rejected them as inadequate to what my folly required, I was, however, at laſt ſo fortunate, as to pleaſe myſelf in what I intended to ſay; nay ſo earneſt was I in my deſire to offer ſuch an excuſe to a woman of ſenſe, as ſhe might accept, and ſo fearful of omitting any palliative circumſtance, that I committed my ideas to paper, and ſet off to Belle-Vue early, in order to have time, ſhould an opportunity offer, of entertaining Mademoiſelle before dinner.

Within half a mile of the caſtle, as I croſſed the common, I ſaw Agnes enter a little cottage in the green lane, at the back of the park paling; I knew it was impoſſible I could be miſtaken; for though it was at a conſiderable diſtance that I ſaw her, there is ſomething ſo peculiarly elegant in her form, her manner, her—in ſhort there is none like her, my heart bounded at the ſight, ſhe was alone, and unattended.

I ſhall

I ſhall want courage, thought I, to addreſs her before the General, or ſhould he be abſent, there is Madame de Vallmont.

I immediately alighted, and tied my horſe to the gate: I was ſoon at the door of the cottage, which was ſhut, and it was not till I had rapt with my whip, that I recollected how extremely abſurd I was acting; what excuſe could I poſſibly make for intruding on the privacy of a lady, to whoſe connections and conduct I was ſo great a ſtranger?

I was interrupted in a train of unpleaſing ideas, which were crowding on my imagination, and prevented from returning to my horſe by the appearance of a youth about ſeventeen in a ragged black coat, who approached the door, with a baſket in his hand, and, as he with great caution opened the latch, in a very low voice demanded my buſineſs; it was no eaſy matter, you will allow, for me to tell the lad what I did not know myſelf; after waiting a moment for an anſwer, I was not prepared to give him.—

Oh! I know, ſaid he, appearing to recollect, be pleaſed to walk in; which I did, into a miſerable apartment, through which he went on beckoning me to follow to the foot of a little pair of ſtairs, where he took off his ſhoes, and aſcended. My curioſity was now greatly excited—where could Agnes be?—and what her buſineſs in ſuch a place as that? at all events I was determined to know; yet I ſtopt involuntary at the chamber door—where I heard whiſpering from different voices, and a decent elderly woman prayed I would walk in there. Oh! Butler—

There

There I beheld the lovely Agnes ſitting at the ſide of ſickneſs, and heart-rendering ſorrow—Oh! how divinely animated was her countenance, what beams of celeſtial fire darted from her lovely eyes, what a glow of ſenſibility irradiated her countenance!

A young girl was kneeling at her feet—the lad who had opened the baſket ſtood behind the chair, while ſhe ſmelled, as if to try their efficacy, ſome ſal volatile drops; on the bed lay the emaciated form of an elderly woman, at that moment offering up thankſgiving, and prayers, for the heavenly creature, who had ſupplied her wants, and who had given peace to her departing ſpirit, by a firm promiſe to protect her children.

The ſurpriſe of Agnes, at ſight of me, was viſible; her face was crimſoned over.

Mr. Harley, ſaid ſhe, is it you?—for heavens ſake what brings you here? did not you ſay, (turning to the boy) it was the doctor?

He verily thought ſo, he anſwered.

Whoever you are, ſir, ſaid the ſick woman, bear witneſs to the goodneſs of that angel—hear my grateful prayers for my gentle benefactreſs, and let not her ſweet example be loſt to the world. Behold the widow's heart, rendered joyful, even in the pangs of death; hear her ſpeak comfort to my poor orphans, and oh! may angels waft her goodneſs to the throne of the prince of peace.

There was ſomething in this addreſs much ſuperior to what I expected in ſuch a place, which added to the ſolemnity of the ſcene, and the placid look of the angel who illumined it,

ſo

ſo affected me, I cannot deſcribe it, I could ſcarce refrain from proſtration at her feet; and ſhould certainly have done it, had not the doctor, for whom the lad had miſtaken me, juſt then entered.

Agnes, the adorable Agnes! then aroſe, and retired with him to the further end of the room; after ſome little converſation, the doctor approached the ſick bed—and Agnes, with inimitable grace, preſented me her hand; *here*, ſir, ſaid ſhe, looking round her—you will perhaps truſt yourſelf with *me*—I led her down the ſtairs, ſhe took her umbrella, and again preſenting her hand—in this place, Mr. Harley, continued ſhe, the inmates of your favourite grove are ſtrangers; it is long ſince happineſs, peace, or contentment have entered this dwelling.

And yet—madam, I found *you* there.

Yes, returned ſhe, and you are ſurpriſed at it.

That poor woman is the widow of a clergyman, the curate of a neighbouring pariſh, whoſe life was a ſacrifice to the duty of his profeſſion, being called to perform the laſt holy office to one of his flock, in a putrid fever, he caught the infection and died—leaving his widow, and thoſe two children, totally deſtitute; grief and want has reduced the widow to the ſituation you have ſeen—ſhame, and a falſe ſhame I think it was, (ſince every body knows the liberal heart of General Moncraſs) prevented her owning her poverty until *ſhe* was dying—and the children almoſt ſtarved. I am the General's almoner on theſe occaſions: but how came you to drop in?—yet why do I aſk?—

your

your philanthropy, my philoſopher, is much better known than your perſon.

What could be the reaſon, having followed her into the cottage, for the expreſs purpoſe of apologiſing for my behaviour to her yeſterday, that I could neither avow it, or avail myſelf of the opportunity which chance had afforded me, of delivering the harangue, I had taken ſuch pains to compoſe? ſtudied ſpeeches, like after wit, are generally out of time; and the truth is, I forgot every ſyllable of mine.

Agnes aſcribed my viſit at the cottage to a motive, I knew I did not merit—but it was in vain that I called to my recollection the meanneſs of attributing, or ſuffering her to attribute it to charity; my heart told me it was wrong, that in this inſtance the ſuffering her to continue in her miſtake, was an act of deceit; all this I felt, yet could not, had my exiſtence depended on it, have aſſigned this interview to its real cauſe; but as we proceeded in our walk towards Belle-Vue, I felt myſelf leſs conſtrained; ſhe was in remarkable high ſpirits, and ſo blended her fine underſtanding with good humour, that I was in raptures; and could very juſtly ſay of her, what the friend of Euphrates ſaid of that wiſe man: "her converſation ſo captivates your "attention, that you hang as it were upon her "lips, and even after the heart is convinced, "the ear ſtill wiſhes to hang on the harmonious "reaſoner."

Before we reached the houſe, I had got the better of my irreſolution, timidity, or what you pleaſe to call it—I could do juſtice to the benevolence of her ſoul, the elegance of her manners,

manners, and the ſweetneſs of her diſpoſition; her eyes became leſs brilliant, but more beautiful, (yet how could that be) than when I met her at the cottage; ſhe hung on my arm, flattered me with her eſteem, ſaid, ſhe believed there was a likeneſs in our diſpoſitions, a parity of ſentiments, that might, ſhe believed, conciliate a virtuous friendſhip, if I was one of thoſe, who allowed ſuch a thing might exiſt; between two young people of a different ſex. She is ingenuity itſelf, and the primitive ſimplicity of the graces is in all ſhe utters. Was it ſtrange, ſo charmed, ſo engaged, and ſo favored, I entirely forgot where I had leſt my horſe, until on entering the houſe, ſtill arm in arm, the divine woman took hold of the general, with her other arm and walking between us, round the ſaloon, repeated to him every circumſtance of our accidental meeting; on which he aſked me, ſmiling, if I had walked ſo far for my health this morning? I then recollected the ſituation in which I left my horſe, and confeſſed that I had found Miſs de Courci's converſation ſo faſcinating, it had entirely ſhut out all the reſt of the world; he was ſo good as to direct a groom to take my orders; but the creature had no ſympathy, the degenerate houyhnhnms had got looſe, and taken himſelf quietly home, unmindful of the poor yahoo his maſter; a circumſtance not altogether pleaſing to Benſon, who was perfectly ſure when ſhe ſaw him return, I had met with ſome accident; in conſequence of which, all my own people, with half the rabble of the village at their heels, came poſting down to Belle-Vue, enquiring all the way, whether

ther any of his honor's ſtray limbs had been ſeen.

Good heavens! cried Madame de Vallmont, as we ſat at dinner, oppoſite the bow window, which commands the road, where are all thoſe people driving? what can poſſibly be the matter? it was a ſight perfectly new at Belle-Vue, though the good creatures often favour *me* with their company in ſcores; a ſervant was diſpatched to make enquiries, and returned with a diſmal account of "as how 'ſquire Harley "had rode out in the morning, and ſure, and "ſarten broke his neck, becauſe as how the "horſe was come home with all his tackle "looſe." This was ridiculous enough, you will ſay, but I have forgiven William, who was out of the way without leave, or would have behaved more reaſonably; and I have given Benſon a new gown, becauſe, in the firſt place, the General was pleaſed to expreſs himſelf delighted at ſuch proofs of affection from my ſervants, and poor neighbours; and becauſe it called the tear into the eye of Agnes, who gave her own orders the honeſt creatures ſhould be regaled with cold meat and ſtrong beer; and becauſe, Butler, ſhe again preſented me her ſoft hand, and would walk between me and the General to the ſervant's-hall, to convince them 'ſquire Harley was alive and well.

What more paſſed before—afterwards, or at the time; I proteſt I know not: the General, Agnes, and Madame de Vallmont, were ſo obliging at to ſet me down at the foot of our hill, from whence I watched the

return

return of the carriage, until "Darkneſs hover'd o'er the ground." When I returned to communicate to you, the happineſs of your

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER XXXIII.

Edward Harley, Eſq. to S. Butler, Eſq.

Hermitage.

I DINED yeſterday, by invitation, at Belle-Vue; it was the birth-day anniverſary of the prince, in whoſe ſervice the General paſſed the early part of his life, and is always obſerved with ſplendour and magnificence at whatever place he happens to be; the General was ſeated at the head of his own table, Miſs de Courci on his right hand, and Madame de Vallmont on his left; the gueſts were ſeventeen in number beſides myſelf, and all gentlemen: our hoſt, was all that wit, wine, and good humour could make him; it is his cuſtom, he informed us, on this anniverſary, to do all poſſible honor to the king of Portugal; bon mots and repartees flew about; a band of muſic played during the time of our dining; the ladies, in compliment to the General, were alſo very chearful; wine, and muſic, were blended with the ſallies of lively imaginations, and thought was——

No, it was *not* baniſhed; my ſoul ſunk within me, when I beheld the charming Agnes; her, whoſe feeling heart, whoſe benevolent tenderneſs, and whoſe modeſt ingenuity, had ſo charmed me in our walk from the cottage; when I beheld, and conſidered her, all lovely as ſhe is, the property

of

of libertiniſm, ah! Butler, how was it poſſible I could enter into the feſtivity of the day; ſhe withdrew after dinner, rather earlier than uſual: what would I not have given to have attended her? but cuſtom, tyrant cuſtom forbad it; yet the aching void ſhe left in my heart, rendered me almoſt inſenſible; amidſt the roar of mirth I was inanimate; and wine, inſtead of having the uſual effect of exhilarating my ſpirits, ſerved only to depreſs them the more.

At laſt the welcome ſummons to the tea-table changed the ſcene; which was no ſooner removed, than the General led the devoted Agnes to the organ, where ſhe played and ſung, for the amuſement of men, whoſe ſobereſt faculties could not have done juſtice to her taſte and execution, and who now, heated with wine, diſhonoured her by their vociferous applauſe: Ah! Butler! how I felt for her—for her ſex—for my *own*.

A magnificent ſupper concluded the feſtivity of the day; the General inſiſted on my taking a bed at Belle-Vue, as it was very late, or rather early, before the gueſts ſeparated: Agnes did not appear at ſupper; I, indeed, could well ſpare *her* from ſuch a party; her abſence now was pleaſing to me, I rejoiced at it—and it was the firſt time I could do ſo.

I aroſe this morning rather before my uſual hour, and walked into the air, in hopes to get rid of a violent pain in my head, and had the pleaſure of meeting Miſs de Courci on the terrace; my head-ach vaniſhed at her ſight, but ah! Butler, where is the preſcription, which will remove the ſtill more acute pain of my heart?——Three hours we loitered in this delightful walk, occaſionally reſting on one or other of the garden

ſeats; three hours I had the felicity to entertain, and be entertained by her; what tranſporting ſenſations are created by friendſhip for ſuch a woman; could the ſenſualiſt, whoſe inſatiate appetite roves without true pleaſure, becauſe without ſenſibility, in queſt of variety; could the libertine, who triumphs in the fall of innocence, without daring to ſay *he* has taſted unalloyed happineſs, could they experience the feelings of a heart, ſo fraught with friendſhip, as mine for Agnes, they would acknowledge the futility, the vanity of their own purſuits, and devote themſelves to a platonic regard for ſuch a woman, if ſuch there be as Agnes de Courci.

With her I am not in danger; I may indulge the thrilling partiality of my ſoul for her, without injury to *her* peace, or riſk to my own; I cannot involve *her* in the inconveniencies of my ſmall fortune; I cannot marry *her*, and how can I regret that I have not that in my power? yet Butler, it is a ſolemn truth, that in her ſociety I could forget the world.

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIV.

J. Butler, Eſq. to Edward Harley, Eſq.

My dear Edward,

CAROLINE being yet forbid writing, I take, at her requeſt, one half hour before I leave town, to ſay to you, a great deal from her, and, a few words from myſelf. In the firſt place then ſhe ſays, that although ſhe certainly did expreſs great curioſity reſpecting the favorite of General Moncraſs; it was very far from her *wiſh*, or expectation, that a woman of *her* character ſhould ſo entirely engroſs the attention of her dear Harley; ſhe is alarmed at the extreme pleaſure you take in her ſociety, which ſhe thinks is an impeachment on your underſtanding, and wiſhes you to remember the old axiom of evil communications, &c. ſhe bargained to be told as in the caſe of Patty Lucas; all the rural tranſactions of your village, which you ſeem entirely now to neglect; and to ſubſtitute in their room, obſervations and events, which are ſo full of Agnes, that they are like the feaſt of Boileau, every diſh favours of nutmeg; and would, were ſhe not certain of the innate rectitude and honeſt pride of your heart, make her tremble for your peace, for with ſuch a right turned mind as yours, utter ruin, ſhe thinks, would be the conſequence of your imbibing a paſſion, incompatible with

honor and reaſon; ſhe therefore implores you to guard your heart againſt the Circe of Belle-Vue.

So much for Caroline, and now, Edward, a word or two, from myſelf.

This Agnes, all the world allows, is a fine girl, ſhe is, you ſay, pleaſing in her manner, ſenſible, engaging, and accompliſhed; ſhe has even the art, for art depend upon it, it is; to affect that certain delicacy, that truly feminine ſomething to which the hearts of men of underſtanding, oftener pay homage than to beauty; *there is none like her:* upon my word, Mr. Edward Harley, you go great lengths in this fair one's commendation; and were there not a few inſurmountable buts in the way, I ſhould, as Caroline ſays, tremble for you myſelf—you are a little touched I believe, but 'tis not from the aforeſaid buts, I dare ſay, any thing more than a mere ſcratch; it is impoſſible a toy, a woman kept for the purpoſe of vice by an old married man, can have made a ſerious impreſſion on Edward Harley; I do not ſuffer myſelf to ſuppoſe it; while, therefore, you find you can play with your partiality for her, I ſhall be glad to hear you indulge it; becauſe if you once become attached to the ſociety of ſprightly females, the next ſtep will be to leave a place where they *are not*, and to remove to where they *are* to be found; ſo far ſo good; but, Edward, if, on the contrary, you feel this woman grows of importance to your happineſs, order your chaiſe and fly immediately; there is no alternative—you eſteem the General, but you would not marry his miſtreſs; nor would you rival him in the affection of a woman he has given ſuch proofs of loving, even if it were in your power, or, if you did,

did, ſucceſs in this caſe would be deſtruction; remember, therefore, there is as much honor in a well conducted retreat as in conqueſt; but one word more of Caroline, ſhe inſiſts on your continuing an unreſerved correſpondence, as ſhe cannot elſe flatter herſelf you take in good part the friendly ſolicitude for your welfare, ever felt by,

Dear Ned, your truly affectionate

JAMES,

CAROLINE BUTLER.

LETTER XXXV.

Edward Harley, Eſq. to J. Butler, Eſq.

Hermitage.

WHAT ſhall I ſay to you, my brother, my ſiſter, your cautions are well meant; but if your ſurmiſes are juſt, they come too late to be of any ſervice to me; certain it is, this woman fills my ſoul; the woman whoſe conduct, *you* ſay, and I cannot deny, is an offence to virtue, occupies the whole heart of him who would not ſwerve from herſtricteſt rule.

Rival the General:—marry his miſtreſs:—how my principles reject the one ſuppoſition, and my honor the other; to fly then is your alternative. Ah! Butler! leave her—ſee her no more—where—in what diſtant clime—among what race of beings could I forget her? where is it her image would not purſue me? where would the ſoft ſound of her voice be loſt on my ears? what amuſements? what avocations would exclude her from my ideas? would the hardeſt labour take from my hand the trembling ſenſibility, a touch from hers occaſions? my mind is againſt her, but my heart is ſubjugated: If I appeal to reaſon, what will that avail me?—I have already made the experiment—reaſon only points out to me her thouſand excellencies—it applauds her judgment—echoes her ſentiments, and repeats her

her very words; I oppoſe the precepts of morality—which have been the guide of my own actions—againſt the imputed enormity of hers—but in vain—her charity, her benevolence, and ſweet diſpoſition, are a ſtandard of morality more lovely, and more attractive, than all philoſophy ever taught; I have no happineſs but in her ſociety—and have not reſolution to tear myſelf from her. I am now a conſtant viſitor at Belle-Vue, or rather, I am perfectly at home there.

We walk out—we ride—we converſe—and form the moſt happy parties together; the General and Madame de Vallmont are an addition, but no interruption to our ſociety, becauſe we are not conſcious of a meaning it is improper for them to develope; I have the honor, frequently, to give them tea at my Hermitage; and ſometimes ſhe drops in alone; ſhe paints with exquiſite taſte, my library is adorned with many of her pieces—and I have ſome of her poetry, which would convince my Caroline, if ſhe is loſt to virtue, it is not by choice.

But ſhe is here; my ſoul bounds at her approach; oh! how my ſenſes ach at her.

My hand, which ever trembles when I write of her, had ſpots of ink on it.

You are writing, Mr. Harley, ſaid ſhe.

I owned I was.

I would venture a trifling wager now, by that guilty look I was your ſubject; come, let me ſee how I look on your paper; and ſhe was actually proceeding to the library—

I trembling ſeized her hand.

She ſaw my confuſion, which, I believe, raiſed her curioſity—ſhe ſtruggled—fear of offending

rendered me reſolute—ſhe ſaid I hurt her hand, and burſt into tears.

Wretch! that I was—*I* excited thoſe tears—I gave pain to the *heart* of Agnes, for ſure I am I did not hurt her hand.

I threw myſelf at her feet—deareſt Agnes—do not kill me with the ſight of thoſe precious drops.

Her tears continued to flow.

I was half diſtracted—I attempted in vain to ſoothe her—ſhe turned from me with diſpleaſure—it was the firſt frown I had ever ſeen on her brow; it almoſt took from me the power to breathe—I flew to my library, and fetched the unfiniſhed letter—

Here, thou irreſiſtible woman, cried I, in anguiſh; this is the letter I was writing—*you are* the ſubject—read it—and then compleat my fate—baniſh me from your friendſhip and preſence for ever.

Pleaſure again reſumed her natural throne—the eyes of Agnes ſparkled—every trace of vexation vaniſhed, and the dreadful frown was no more; No, Mr. Harley, ſaid ſhe, I will not accept of an extorted confidence; nor believe, though atteſted by yourſelf, *you could* write, what were I to read, would loſe you my friendſhip; put up your letter, my philoſopher—and extending her hand—let us be friends.

On my knees I took the dear pledge of peace, and preſſed it ardently to my lips.

Oh! Agnes, Agnes, never—never more venture at ſuch an act of reconciliation; in that moment—

Butler, let not my ſiſter know my weakneſs.

In

In that moment, all my boaſted fortitude had near forſaken me; I tremble at my own ideas—yes—in that moment, I forgot what was due to myſelf—and to *her*—the obſtacles to an *honorable* union; the infamy of a *vicious* one; paſſion, wild and ungovernable, took poſſeſſion of my whole ſoul; the dear Agnes melted at the emotions ſhe had occaſioned—looked—but let me for ever forget her looks—for while I knelt before her, I remembered only that *ſhe* was lovely and that *I* adored her.

Happily, however, before an act, a word had eſcaped me to confirm the wild diſorder of my looks; recollection flaſhed like fire on my brain—the ſtrong ſenſations of my mind, the inward conviction of latent guilt, and ingratitude, actually exiſting in my ſoul, under the plauſible form of platonic friendſhip, overcame me—a darkneſs, which I can only liken to what I conceive of Milton's meaning, when he ſpeaks of

"Darkneſs viſible"

came before my eyes; I fell back.

Agnes ſhrieked, and called for help—ſhe flew to ſupport me, but her weak efforts could not prevent my ſinking on the ground—my ſervants, who now entered, helped to raiſe me, I ſoon recovered; and they left the room.

How you have frightened me, Mr. Harley, ſaid ſhe, taking my hand—

To her aſtoniſhment, I ſnatched it from her.

Tears again guſhed from her eyes—and I was again frantic; I beſought her to leave me—bid her who had the world at her command, not to aſſociate with miſery——

She

She wept without anſwering——

Oh! Agnes, cried I, I conjure you to leave me —on my knees I conjure you—you are not ſafe with me—I am not to be truſted—return to your protector—I am miſerable—but I would not make you ſo—leave me to my fate.

If you wiſh me gone, Mr. Harley (ſaid ſhe) in a tender accent, I will certainly oblige you—but ſomething has diſturbed and perhaps afflicted you—compoſe yourſelf—then if you ſay you are weary of my friendſhip, and deſire my abſence, I will inſtantly leave you; ſhe turned from me to the window—I followed her—tears were in her eyes——

Do you really wiſh me gone, Mr. Harley? ſaid ſhe, in a voice ſcarce articulate.

What could I ſay?

She continued with me ſo late, that we did not reach Belle-Vue 'till dinner was ſerved—I returned in the evening, and found this once dear paradiſe a deſert.

The poor widow is dead—I took her weeping ſon from the grave of his mother, as Agnes did the daughter; how eloquent is he in her praiſe —ſhunning oſtentation in all her charities, ſhe attributes to the General's command, the relief her own heart communicates.

You may truly ſay, Caroline, that I neglect the rural occurrences of my own village—I am even ſo abſtracted, from every concern, in which Agnes has not a ſhare, that I am become a ſtranger in my own houſe; the old gardener, with tireſome aſſiduity, talks of this improvement, and that plantation; if I hear him, it is with a diſtaſteful apathy; if by accident he meets me in the grove, and points out to my obſervation,

obſervation, any of the mighty things on which he is ſo intent, I ſee them indeed, but it is with a vacant eye; yet, do not chide, my beloved ſiſter, the heart, which with all its frailties, will ever be warmly, and affectionately devoted to you.

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIII.

Edward Harley, Eſq. to J. Butler, Eſq.

Hermitage.

I Have again deliberately, and would I could ſay diſpaſſionately, peruſed your letter; you are perfectly right, my ſafety is only in flight; I have loſt all taſte for every earthly enjoyment but her ſociety; the whole world is divided in my ideas, only by where *ſhe* is and where ſhe is not; the little ſpot which contains her, would, were I the greateſt potentate on earth, be a boundary to my ambition.

How has this fatal paſſion grown on me—in how ſhort a period have I experienced the veracity of your predictions!

But will abſence reſtore my ſerenity? Oh! that it would! in reſpect to your advice, and in regard to my own peace, I ought to make the trial.

I will not viſit Belle-Vue, I will endeavour to recall my wandering thoughts to thoſe ſweet haunts, where once they were bounded by content; my poor neighbours, and guileleſs friends, I have neglected your wants, and forſaken

ſaken your intereſts; thou venerable ſhade, impervious to the rays of the ſcorching ſun, can'ſt thou not ſcreen me from the devouring flame that conſumes me? will not the gentle murmur of the clear ſtream, whoſe enamelled banks I have ſo carefully decorated, aſſuage the anguiſh of my tortured ſoul?

At leaſt I will try.

* * * * * *

This is the ſecond day I have adhered to my reſolution; what a frightful chaſm has it made in my exiſtence; I would write to you every hour, but have no ſubject, but her I will not name.

* * * * * * * * * *

Eight days are now elapſed ſince I have been at Belle-Vue; I have anſwered to the repeated enquiries of the General, that the buſineſs of my farm deprives me of the honor of attending him; an apology which, were I capable of applying to my affairs, would not only be natural but true. Eight days!—I have not heard the ſound of Agnes's name, except from the friendly echo of my own grove, eight days!—I have not ſeen the face I adore—I have not contemplated the maſter-piece of nature—I have not even enquired after her!

When the ſervants appeared from Belle-Vue I retired out of ſight, not daringly as I eagerly uſed

uſed to do, to take a meſſage myſelf, leſt my officious tongue ſhould enquire after *her*. *Her* —whom? the miſtreſs of General Moncraſs. Ah! ſhe is here!

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XXXV.

Edward Harley, Eſq. to J. Butler, Eſq.

THE inſtant you receive this, take the proper ſteps to purchaſe a commiſſion for me in a marching regiment; one going to the Eaſt, or Weſt-Indies—to the Antipodes——any where.

I incloſe power to ſell out of the ſtocks, what money may be neceſſary for the purpoſe——I will accept no favor from General Moncraſs.

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVI.

In anſwer to a letter that does not appear.

Mr. Harley to Mr. Butler.

WHY, my dear brother, do you ſo deeply probe the wounds of your unhappy Harley? you know not the pain you inflict; it is on the condition only of your forbearing your cruel kindneſs I can reſume my pen.

General Moncraſs has no right to be offended with me for refuſing his favor—what—becauſe I am conſcious I cannot be grateful? would you infer *that* is a reaſon I ſhould accept obligations? has he, or any man, a right to impoſe a debt on me, it is not in my nature to pay? I accept no favor from General Moncraſs, let him take it as he will, my reſolution is unchangeable.

E. HARLEY.

What are Caroline's diſlikes to the German ſtory of Werter? what reaſon will her gentle nature give for refuſing her compaſſion to the involuntary

involuntary ſorrows of the heart? "it is a bad "ſtory, ſhe ſays, divinely told," the ſtory may be fictitious, but the writer muſt have felt—poor Patty Lucas ſaid it was hard to die of love—but yet, ſhe aver'd it might be—I am ſure it may—but a piſtol ball is quicker, more certain, and leſs painful.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVII.

Mr. Harley to Mr. Butler.

Hermitage.

WEAKER than infancy, and more variable than the elements, is your Edward; two days ago I rejected all favor from General Moncraſs: to-day, my Agnes, ah! would to God ſhe was indeed *mine*, brought the commiſſion; I ſpurned at the idea of accepting it.

For *my* ſake, Mr. Harley, for the ſake of Agnes de Courci; oh! *her* power over my ſenſes, her empire over my reaſon is enchantment—

I go to-morrow to inſult my own principles, by returning thanks for a favor, that my heart revolts at accepting; my burſting heart!

E. HARLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVIII.

Mr. Harley to Mr. Butler in continuation.

THE General's reception of me was at once friendly and ſolemn; he did not, he ſaid, wiſh to know more of my affairs, than I choſe to confide to his friendſhip, he would not therefore enquire into the reaſons of my depriving him of the pleaſure of ſeeing me at Belle-Vue: nor of the motives that had ſo ſuddenly induced me to give up a plan (alas it was torn from my ſoul) too romantic, he had always foreſeen, to be laſting; it was enough for him, that I meant to become a uſeful member of ſociety, without troubling himſelf about the methods by which an event ſo acceptable to him, and all my friends, had been brought about: he cautioned me to avoid an error many young poeple he knew had fallen into, who having begun in retirement, and fancied themſelves wonderfully happy, no ſooner get a glance at the great world, than they fall into the moſt blameable exceſſes; he warned me againſt deep play—and added, that as the firſt approaches to evil were not eaſily avoided, and as I had at preſent, too many reſources within my own mind, to be fond of cards, he recommended it to me never to enter into parties, to which my inclinations, as well as the reſpect and politeneſs, due to the company

company I might happen to meet with, did not lead me.

As to your general conduct, Harley, ſaid he, putting a volume of Shakeſpeare into my hand, if you engrave the advice given by old Polonius to his ſon on your memory, and adhere to the excellent maxim he lays down for the conduct of Lærtes, you will need no other monitor through life.

Noble General Moncraſs! why cannot I be the very man you firſt honoured with your notice? his ſon, Mr. Reuben Moncraſs, a very fine young man, whom I had not before ſeen, was preſent; he introduced me to him, with ſo many encomiums on the goodneſs of my heart, and ſuch manifeſt proofs of the tenderneſs of his own, that I was on the point of throwing myſelf at his feet, and laying all the ſecret depravity of my ſoul, open to him.

But I was deterred by the fear of injuring Agnes, and returned home exceedingly indiſpoſed as ſoon as dinner was removed.

Home did I ſay—what home have the miſerable? once, it was the manſion of peace—it is now dark, diſmal, and hateful; the officious kindneſs of poor Benſon, throws me into traſports of paſſion—I, who was once reſpected for the mildneſs of my temper, am become furious and vindictive; I no longer regard my farm—the clamours of my diſcarded poor ceaſe to affect me—my ſenſes fleet from me—all ſenſe of joy I mean, for that of *ſorrow* is ſunk deep in my heart——

Peggy, the widow's daughter, has juſt brought me a note—it is from Agnes—

The

The NOTE.

Agnes de Courci to Mr. Harley.

I am grieved at the diſtracted ſtate of your mind; unhappy man! whence ariſes your deſpair; rouſe from this unavailing ſorrow; you place happineſs out of the reach of time; you are *now* a ſoldier, your country is at peace, but you have a taſk more difficult than conquering the foe, you muſt ſubdue yourſelf; in the mean time you will come to bid us adieu: Let me aſk a proof of your friendſhip for Agnes de Courci, you will receive many of hers to you; let us ſee you chearful, *deſerve* to be fortunate, and you will be ſo.

AGNES DE COURCI.

I am now going (having informed my own people of my intention, and given the neceſſary orders for my departure) to pay my reſpects at Belle-Vue; I ſhall ſee you very ſoon. Adieu!

E. HARLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIX.

—— *Harley, Eſq. to J. Butler.*

Hermitage.

YES, Butler—yes, Caroline—rigid moraliſts, I have obeyed you; I have left my Hermitage. Heavens! can it be? I am now thirty miles from Belle-Vue—from Agnes; and does my heart yet beat?—Flows the blood, which roſe to all the perturbation of frenzy, but laſt night at her touch in even currents through my veins? Oh! thou ever enchanting arbitreſs of my fate! it is in vain I meaſure ſpace to fly from thee; thy loved idea will purſue me to the confines of mortality; and to forget thee, every thing muſt vaniſh from my mental view. I had reſolved to leave her, and went to Belle-Vue to take a final adieu; my coward tongue would not, could not ſpeak the dreadful farewel; and I was returning without hinting my intention, when Peggy overtook me, and put a billet into my hand; I could not credit my ſenſes, it was an aſſignation; how I trembled, my emotion ſtopped reſpiration; yet, Butler, and were it otherwiſe, I ſhould not approach the chaſte wife of my friend with this detail, I almoſt inſtantly recovered to a ſenſe only of diſguſt; againſt report, againſt appearances, and almoſt againſt reaſon; my heart had hitherto refuſed belief of the infamous connection

tion, in which ſhe was ſaid to live with the General; but *here* was confirmation ſtrong of all, the captivating modeſty, which had enſlaved my reaſon, as much as her beauty, had excited my paſſion, was now no more; the appointed hour was midnight, the place of rendezvous the temple, a ſmall building almoſt hid in a thick wood at the bottom of the flower garden.

My mind was in tumults till the hour arrived, when I repaired to the temple, my whole heart fixed on one object, that of reforming the charming creature, of ſnatching her from deſtruction, from infamy; and ſo delighted was I with this ſcheme, I had brought it to a certainty in my mind, that I ſhould ſucceed; the moon as if conſcious of the ſcene ſhe was to witneſs, ſhone with extreme ſplendor; and my eyes, achingly fixed in eager expectation of *her* on whom they ever dwell with adoration and pleaſure, were at laſt gratified by the ſight of her, walking calmly down the avenue: Oh! Butler, let me own to thee, I forgot in that extatic moment all the laudable purpoſe of my ſoul—I flew in ardour, in rapture to meet her, ſhe ſhrunk from my warm embrace, I ſaw all the traces of affright, and terror in her countenance, ſhe would have retreated, and it was by force only I detained her—I ſee I have done wrong, ſaid the angel; pray, Mr. Harley, let me go; the modeſt terror, viſible in her manner ſurpriſed me; I recollected myſelf, if, thought I, this agitation is real, how unpractiſed in vice muſt ſhe be: I told her ſhe muſt not yet go, I had a great deal I muſt, and would ſay to her; and attempting to lead her into the temple, ſhe burſt into tears: Oh! Butler, my ſoul is congenial to hers, no emotion of her mind is viſible, when I

am preſent, but what I am inſtantly, by a ſympathetic power, affected with; let naturaliſts, thoſe who pleaſe themſelves with a minute inveſtigation of cauſes and effects, 'till loſt in the labyrinth of their own wiſdom, let thoſe account for it; my tears accompanied hers ſtill in diſpleaſure; though I had given her no indelicate cauſe, ſhe would have left me; at length I became more collected, and then with as much earneſtneſs, as if my ſoul depended on the event, I endeavoured to make her ſenſible of her diſgraceful ſituation.

Butler, ſhe is either white as miniſtering angels, or ſhe is deceitful as the damned; her firſt emotion was ſurpriſe; ſhe queſtioned me with quickneſs, but as I proceeded, ſhe ſeemed loſt in attention; wept to agony, and at length burſt ſuddenly from me.

I had no power to detain her; yet how many things of moment to my peace, to my exiſtence, had I left unſaid, I did (I hope Caroline will not be offended) offer her my ſiſter's protection, if ſhe would leave the General; I was authoriſed, I thought, to do that, both by virtue and prudence; had I been ſo fortunate as to prevail on her, it would have been a great ſatisfaction to Lady Mary to know how ſhe was diſpoſed of, and to me, oh! what would it not have been to me.

How I reached the Hermitage, the God under whoſe eye I had acted only knows; her image, her tears, the ſound of her voice, accompanied me; I threw myſelf on my bed, and continued ruminating on the ſcene I had paſſed with Agnes, until my ſervant informed me the chaiſe was at the door, and the trunks, which I had ordered to be ready, all chained on.

What

What I felt at that moment, Butler, is not to be convinced or expreſſed; a thouſand procraſtinations, which ſhame forbid by uttering, roſe to my lips; what would I not have given for one, only one interview more—the officious Benſon brought my chocolate, it ſtood untouched; and now awakened from my reverie, I heard the buſtle below among my ſervants.

I looked out of my window, oh! how delightful the verdure of the fields, and the rich drapery of the ſurrounding trees; the melody of the vocal throng, which was only to be exceeded in ſweetneſs by the ſongſtreſs of my ſoul, formed a concert as if to invite my ſtay; I had been ungratefully inſenſible of the beauty of my own paradiſe, which, now I was leaving it, ſeemed to reproach my neglect; but it was thee, Agnes, who weaned my ſoul from all in which it had delighted, and it was thy dear form that now lurked under the pleaſing ſcene before me, and with thy magnetic power ſtill drew me to one point: oh! for one moment's reſolution, I cried, and ran, down to the chaiſe—the lad went off in a hand gallop; I paſſed the obeliſk with ſuch velocity, I had hardly time to give it a ſigh; and my mind has been in a perfect chaos ever ſince.

I have thought on ſeveral things I omitted to ſay to her, abſolutely neceſſary to my peace and *her* welware: I ſhould have told her, where the man, who offered himſelf as her guide to virtue, might be found; I ſhould have aſſured her of my unchangeable devotion and ſervices; I might under the cover of the night have taken a lock of her lovely hair, and I ſhould not, perhaps, as I was going from her, poſſibly for ever, have been refuſed her picture; many more things I ſhould

have thought on, which then I forgot, but now can think of nothing elſe; what a diſmal road from the Hermitage here! I will go no farther this night.

* * * * * * * * *

It is in vain to diſguiſe the truth, why indeed ſhould I attempt it; I cannot leave the country without one more interview with Agnes; a dreadful foreboding hangs on my heart; how could I go, without knowing whether ſhe got into the houſe in ſafety? whether her tender and delicate conſtitution did not receive injury from the damp of the night, from the mortification ſhe will feel, if ſhe has the leaſt ſenſe of honor, on a retroſpect of our converſation? I was too little maſter of myſelf; her ſoul, mild as virtue, adorned by the graces, muſt have felt the rude ſhock of my incautious addreſs; I ſhould have ſoothed, not terrified her; I yet ſee her terror, I feel her agitation, when preſſed to my beating heart; and can I then leave her for ever, without obtaining her pardon? Butler, forgive and pity me; I return, I cannot exiſt from her; yet to what purpoſe do I return? alas! perhaps to die at her feet; oh! that without a dreadful act of my own, I could indeed die, where I muſt not hope to live.

E. HARLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XL.

Mrs. J. Butler to Edward Harley.

London.

REFLECTIONS, my deareſt Edward, are inſult, where the mind, enervated with ſorrow, and ſelf reproach, is ſenſible of its own debaſement; I feel the pangs which rend your heart; yes, Edward, Caroline Butler's virtuous joys, her happineſs is ſacrificed at the ſhrine of a wanton—you ſtart, you are angry: the eye that has penetrated *your* heart you fancy cannot beam with impurity; *you* only, will not allow your Agnes to be leſs than angelic, while the whole world knows ſhe is an abandoned woman; I may in the bitterneſs of my grief, inveigh againſt a cauſe ſo fatal to whomſoever comes within the contagion of her influence; the ruin of the peace of the amiable Lady Moncraſs, is not enough; Julia Neville, her only daughter, diſtractedly fond of young Reuben, and impatient at the reſtraint laid on her, has left her mother, without a poſſibility of retracing her erring ſteps—ſure this woman, this Agnes, was ſent emong us for general deſtruction; yours in particular, I firmly believe ſhe will occaſion: how are you changed, how fallen is that mind where honor, and all the dignity of placid virtue, were wont to dwell; oh!

Edward with your peace is flown that of the ſiſter of your youth, ſhe ſuffers for you, and the gay hopes of a happy and proſperous life, are in their opening cloſed, by the miſerable infatuation of her adopted brother.

What a letter is your laſt, it is wet with my tears; what more than magic ſpell has enchanted you?——

"You have left your Hermitage. You have "parted with Agnes." Oh! that the firſt event had preceded your viſit at Belle-Vue; but you return to take a laſt look—I am ſhocked at your inconſiſtency; you talk of living like a madman, and dying like an infidel.

Among the myriads whom the omniſcient father of the creation has ſent into the world, the finiſhed maſter pieces of his unerring hand; whoſe innate virtue is ſeen to beam on their countenance; were there none but this fatal woman, not one, who could touch the heart of Edward Harley? where, in what part of that ſacred grove, where our late amiable monitreſs taught us the mild precepts of purity; could my Edward nouriſh a paſſion, which ſtrikes at his mental exiſtence?

How lip deep are the perfections you idolize, who but my infatuated Edward, would expoſe themſelves to ridicule, by extolling the *virtue*, the *graces*, the *honor* of a woman, who is companion to a married man? Oh! Edward, bluſh—handſome, no, doubt ſhe may be, and the charms with which nature has endowed her, are doubtleſs improved by art: her lillies and roſes will, I dare ſay ſtand the teſt of time—then ſhe ſings, and plays; heavens! that an angel ſhould boaſt accompliſhments—any of the

Signoras

Signoras in the Hay-market may be ſeen diſplaying for half-a guinea; how futile, how inadequate to your own ſelf juſtification, are the fulleſt extent of her attractions!

Leave the country, my dear Edward, riſk not, for God's ſake, another interview, ſhe is your bane—you are not equal to the art of ſuch a woman; what are plain moral virtue, and rectitude, when oppoſed to cunning decked in *her* ſeducing garb? Once more I entreat you—delay not a moment, I tremble with apprehenſion, 'till you are ſafe, with my James, and your

C. J. B.

LETTER XLI.

Edward Harley, Eſq. to J. Butler, Eſq.

Hermitage.

DO I live? may I believe my ſenſes? Agnes, *my* Agnes is awakened to a ſenſe of virtue; ſhe has left Belle-Vue, on the very night, within perhaps the very hour, when her Harley implored her ſo to do.

Bleſſed hour! when inſpired by the ſoul of honor, I dared to ſpeak unwelcome truths to the woman I adore.

But where, Butler? where is ſhe now? alone, unprotected, a ſtranger in the kingdom; who knows into what perils ſhe may fall; O thou almighty defender of the innocent, protect, preſerve my Agnes.

Yes, Butler, my Agnes will yet be an honor to ſociety, and oh! do not ſeverely judge of that fond heart, which ſwells in rapture at the hope of receiving the dear wanderer to its inmoſt receſs; nor you, my ſiſter, my friend, turn in ſcorn from a penitent, over whom God himſelf will rejoice: Oh! my friend, now that I dare hope the time may come, when I ſhall call Agnes mine, when I ſhall ſee her fine eyes lifted up in confidence, among the virtuous of her ſex; my full heart cannot contain itſelf; did you but know her, were you to hear the ſenti-

ments

ments ſhe utters, and were you to melt like me at the ſound of her melodious voice, like me, did I ſay, no, ſhe is my kindred ſoul, who in every atom will be affected by her like me? I ſhall live, I ſhall once more tread the ſweet maze of my woods with rapture, if heaven deſtines her to be my companion there; a meſſage from Belle-Vue, the General is ill; he was here yeſterday, enquired whether Agnes had been ſeen here; adieu, I am going to obey his ſummons.

E. HARLEY.

LETTER XLII.

Edward Harley, Eſq. to J. Butler Eſq;
In continuation.

Hermitage.

I TOLD you in my laſt I was ſent for to Belle-Vue, and that I was juſt going thither—I found the houſe in confuſion—the General ſeized with the gout in his ſtomach, and the family in great apprehenſions for his life; Gallina heſitated about admitting me, yet he knew his maſter wiſhed much to ſee me.

Madame de Vallmont came to me the moment ſhe heard I was arrived—

Oh! Mr. Harley, ſaid ſhe, I have but one hope, and it reſts on you; I know you had an interview with Miſs de Courci the night before the laſt; you were abſent yeſterday; tell me on your honor, do you know any thing of her, has ſhe put herſelf under your protection? I declared on my honor, as I truly might, ſhe had not; and I added to this aſſeveration, my fervent wiſh that ſhe had—Madame de Vallmont wept; poor thing, ſaid ſhe—ſhe is then gone to France; Madame St. Lawrens is not here, ſhe will follow her to Abbeville, ſhe will diſturb the laſt moments of her poor mother, and will infallibly break her own heart: all this was leading

to

to the ſubject next mine, which was bent on purſuing Agnes; I was already on the road to France in my wiſhes, and it was with great difficulty ſhe prevailed on me to ſtay at Belle-Vue, until the phyſician could be conſulted on the ſafety of my being admitted to the General; to my great joy he forbid it, and I am juſt now ſetting out poſt for the convent of which Madame St. Lawrens is abbeſs, and where Agnes is certainly gone; if I do not overtake her by the way, I ſhall be ſure to meet her at the convent. Hope, my dear ſiſter, is my fellow traveller; who knows but my angel is innocent; how the thought elates me, it is, after all, more than poſſible; would the abbeſs elſe patronize her? would ſhe fly to the protection of a convent, from the arms of pollution? or, grant the worſt, ſhe will yet reform, and oh! extatic thought, ſhe will yet be mine; when you receive this I ſhall be far on my way to France; yes, beloved ſhades, where I have wandered in peaceful ſecurity; where I thought care could not enter, and where alſo I found the futility of every precaution, to ſhut out the paſſion that now occupies my whole ſoul; I have bid you adieu, never more to return, never more to ſolace in your calm delights, except I bring my Agnes to ſhare with me the joys of virtuous love; yet, Caroline, though loſt in the wild tranſports which hope, ſo long a ſtranger to my breaſt, inſpires; I do not forget how deluſive it may prove; and ſhould it now deceive me, my leſſon will be a very ſhort one, I have only to learn how to die; I cannot exiſt without Agnes, ſhe is all that can render life deſirable, nay ſhe is

life itſelf; and ſhould that fail, think, my beloved James, and ſtill dearer Caroline, with pity on the fate of your loſt

E. HARLEY.

You will find my will in the third drawer of my ſecretary.

LETTER

LETTER XLIII.

General Moncraſs to Major Melroſe.

Belle-Vue.

My dear Major,

I AM too much indiſpoſed to move, or ſhould have been with you, inſtead of this letter; Agnes, my beloved Agnes, has left me; ſhe is gone from Belle-Vue: dear, unfortunate fugitive! the pride of her ſoul took alarm; yet I thought I had uſed every precaution—

But I write to you in riddles, and am too ill to be more explicit; *that* I have ſaid before, and you did ſpare your friend the more for the information; but yours is the warmth of a noble heart, and would be a ſevere reproof to mine, if all was not right, in the grand account between me and my maker—I need not ſay I know nothing of Julia, yet I ſhould not be ſorry that Reuben did; but he was at Glaſgow, and ignorant of her elopement.

I dare not think on Lady Mary's ſufferings; but I believe ſhe has a conſolation very ill founded, ſhe thinks Julia has put herſelf under my protection, dear imprudent child, I wiſh to heaven ſhe was with me—

So many diſtreſſing events croud on me together, ſome you do, and ſome you do not know, rend my heart, and take from me all my

my boaſted fortitude; a gouty attack is juſt repelled from my ſtomach, my nerves are no longer proof againſt grief, and indeed my whole frame is in a terrible ſhattered ſtate: I write particularly to beg, my dear Major, you will immediately, both by yourſelf, and what emiſſaries you think proper to employ, make every poſſible enquiry after Agnes; ſhe will certainly endeavour to get a paſſage to France; whither I am juſt now ſolicitous to prevent her going; but ſhould you be ſo happy as to find her, lay her under no reſtraint, only ſay that that I have a letter for her from St. Clare; recover her, dear Melroſe, and guard her honor and her perſon, as you would your wife, or ſiſter; ſhe is *not* my miſtreſs. She is nearer to my heart than ever woman in that ſituation was to man.

MONCRASS.

LETTER

LETTER XLIV.

Major Melroſe to General Moncraſh.

London.

My dear General,

YOU are certain, notwithſtanding the levity I *ſhould* perhaps be aſhamed at *my* years to confeſs, that I ſhare in all your diſtreſſes: I am, indeed, not only ſurprized at the unaccountable elopement of your Agnes, but exceedingly alarmed at the effect it has had on your health. But, General, never let it be ſaid, after all the ſtorms you have weathered, that a woman has at laſt conquered you; do not be angry,—I will ſwear your Agnes is a veſtal, and yourſelf an anchorite; rather than on a ſick bed, you ſhould tax me with unkindneſs. By heaven, between you and your wife, (who, to be ſure, as uſual in all matrimonial ſquabbles, are both in the right) I am terribly out of ſorts. Her Ladyſhip is in town, and her ſervant left a card for me the moment of her arrival.

I have made all poſſible inquiries after your ſtray lamb, and as the whim is of ſuch importance to you, wiſh I had ſucceeded better; I have likewiſe taken the ſureſt method of gaining information,

information, ſhould any young perſon of her deſcription apply for a paſſage to the continent from hence; that is, I have made it the *intereſt* of thoſe who were moſt likely to know it, to give me early intelligence—My inclination would certainly carry me to Belle-Vue, were I not perſuaded I ſhall, by perſiſting in my inquiries after Agnes, more oblige my friend.

And now to your lady—Upon my ſoul, dear Moncraſs, the wiſeſt thing you can both do, is to return to your mutual vows; I foreſee if you do not, I ſhall be obliged to be executor to you both.

I do not wonder at Julia's elopement—The houſe in St. James's-place has more the appearance of a mauſoleum, than the gay and elegant manſion of Lady Moncraſs. I congratulated her Ladyſhip that it had taken place *before* marriage.

Oh! Major, ſaid Lady Mary, mildly, is not that judging *too* hard of *my* daughter?

I am judging, Madam, of Mr. Neville's daughter (ſhe coloured) and of human nature.

Poor human nature, ſighed ſhe—but for all that, Major, if I could recover my truant girl—

You would wed her to a puppy, interrupted I.

Lord Morden, anſwered ſhe, gravely, is far from a contemptible character, and I had rather ſee her the wife of a common labourer than——

Than who, Lady Mary? ſpeak out.

You know who I mean.

Well, Madam, I confeſs I do; and am ſorry to my ſoul to hear you make ſuch a declaration. And will Lady Mary forgive me, if I tell her in the ſofteſt whiſper, ſhe has ſuffered the baneful

effects

effects of one paſſion to taint the luſtre of her whole life——

How, Sir? cried ſhe, colouring.

Indeed you have—all you ſee and hear, every action, every word you utter, are all tinctured with jealouſy—curſed jealouſy. How elſe could a woman of your underſtanding ever ſuppoſe Julia Neville an over-indulged heireſs in her own right, ſenſible, ſpirited and volatile, would give up the firſt attachment of her young heart?—An attachment originally countenanced by yourſelf, in compliment to your caprice, (pardon me) and make herſelf the implement of reſentment for an imaginary wrong (ſhe at leaſt thinks it ſo) offered a mother, who was as ready to ſacrifice all for love, as the daughter can be for the ſoul of her?

Very well, Major—very well—my domeſtic misfortunes expoſe me to contempt, to ridicule—

They do, indeed, Madam—but not from me——

Heavens! Major, is it you who addreſs me in this manner!—How, Sir, have I deſerved? and her proud heart ſwelled to her eyes.

Faithful, Lady Mary, are the words of a friend.

A friend, Sir! Is this friendſhip? Is it humane to upbraid me with the fatal conſequences of that love for *your* friend, which has coſt me ſo dear? If the imprudence of my only child is to be aſcribed to that cauſe, do I not, think you, Sir, ſuffer enough from my own feelings? and do you call it the office of a *friend*, to ſtab me to the heart with reproaches, that more properly belong to the barbarous man who has ſo cruelly involved me in ſuch complicated ſorrow?

Ah!

Ah! Lady Mary, how changed would your manner of ſpeaking of General Moncraſs be, if his preſent illneſs were to terminate fatally.

Illneſs, Major! What illneſs? Who is ill? Terminate fatally—and ſhe actually panted for breath—Dear Melroſe, taking out her ſal volatile, ſure General Moncraſs is not ill—you would not conceal it. O too ſure (and then indeed the torrent burſt forth, ſhe wept even to an agony) I am not equal to that trial—no—all my prayers are offered to heaven, that *I* may be the victim, that my life may fleet from me in the ſad ejaculation of my heart—I indeed wonder that I yet live; but grief, though ſlow, is ſure in its definitive effect on the human frame. God *only* knows how contentedly I ſhould reſign a life in which I find no comfort; every hope of happineſs, every proſpect of felicity, ſhut in for ever from me, when I loſt the affections of my once adored Moncraſs——

You have not, Lady Mary, loſt his affections—he ſtill——

Oh! forbear, Major—forbear an attempt that inſults my reaſon. Speaking of mere perſonal attractions, what hope have I, could I ſtoop to the trial, to wean his heart from his preſent attachment? His Agnes is beautiful, young, and accompliſhed; if ſhe has errors, the bloom of health and youth are a covering which fondneſs will not penetrate. I, alas! am paſt the ſeaſon of beauty, "homely age hath the alluring beauty "took from my poor cheek," my ſpirit broke, my form waſting, and ſubject to many infirmities; ſome from conſtitution, and more from grief of heart. This face, Major, and this fading form might indeed claim compaſſion from General

General Moncraſs; but my ſpirit is too near akin to *his*, to accept ſo inadequate a ſubſtitute for love. My paſſion for him ſtill retains all the warmth of its firſt impreſſion. In the enthuſiaſm of unbounded fondneſs, I forgot he was mortal. Happy had I been, if he had ſuffered me to die in the pleaſing delirium: but I pain you, Major, (indeed ſhe did)—and what do theſe repetitions, thoſe fond regrets all tend to, but to convince you, although I know the world will ridicule me for it, the delicacy of my affection for General Moncraſs is ſuch, that even if he had, as I requeſted, acknowledged his error, and reſigned his favorite to me, I ſhould, though not in a ſtate of ſeparation, have been equally miſerable: never ſhould I then any more than now, have forgot that "ſuch things were."—Perhaps I am wrong—perhaps I am myſelf convinced that I am ſo; but in me it is nature, and I cannot diveſt myſelf of prejudices imbibed at a very early period of my life; when my heart received the gueſt which has been always dear to it—when I firſt loved Moncraſs, my ſentiments were exactly what they now are, and were rooted in my mind by his coincidence.

Dear Lady Mary, returned I, permit me only to remind you, that never yet was a man created without ſome imperfection, ſome alloy; and however deſirable that extreme purity on which you reſt your notions of happineſs, we live in an age when it would be impoſſible to retain it without being abſolutely ridiculous. ——

I do not contend that it is, Major, anſwered ſhe, what I have ſaid has been rather a confeſſion of my own particularities, than a wiſh to ſet up *my* opinion as a ſtandard of what is right and what

what is wrong. Cuſtom reconciles you gentlemen to many things, which in the weaker ſex would be atrocious. A modern huſband will not bluſh to be told of actions which would deprive his wife of every thing valuable; would render her an alien to her friends, an outcaſt to ſociety, and leave her dependant on the man ſhe had injured for means of ſubſiſtence, how large ſoever her dower might be: All this, can cuſtom, upheld by ſocial law, effect; but, Major, aſk your heart if it has ever been tenderly enſlaved—what had cuſtom *then* to do with your feelings—could it blunt the edge of one pang inflicted by injured love? Cuſtom cannot reconcile us to a deprivation of our deareſt treaſure, nor relieve the aching woe of deſerted tenderneſs; in theſe caſes, it rather irritates than alleviates; and in ſuch minds as mine, only ſerves to wean it from every earthly hope, without diveſting it of the agonizing remembrance of paſt days, which will *live even in death*. You know your *friend*, and you know *me*—why then defend in *him* a conduct which has ſo weak a ſource, and reproach *me* for what preys on myſelf, without injuring any other perſon——

I beg your pardon, Madam, I do not reproach, I venerate your many virtues, and I conſider your grief as ſacred. I would only awaken you to a ſenſe of the dangerous predicament in which yourſelf, the General, and your daughter now ſtand—My friend is very ill—ſhe ſtarted—*your* countenance, Madam, is not of the moſt flattering—and where now is Julia?

With him, I ſuppoſe, anſwered ſhe, colouring with reſentment—

Upon

Upon my honor, no—Madam—I wiſh ſhe were!

She is then with Reuben, and he knows it—Now, General, I want to know at this period exactly what will be your thoughts on the next act of your friend. I am not perfectly pleaſed with myſelf, and have only the intention to comfort me, under a kind of latent reproach my mind gives me—and which, ſhould your blame be added to it, will be rather an uneaſy ſenſation.

I had your letter in my pocket, and without recollecting the great ſolicitude it expreſſed for Agnes, thought it would at leaſt convince Lady Mary of your innocence with reſpect to Julia: It had that effect to be ſure, but the many expreſſions of tenderneſs for Agnes, and the conviction that her daughter was actually out of the protection of her friends, operated in a dreadful manner—I really thought two hours that I ſtaid, her life in the greateſt danger; ſucceſſive faintings and hyſterics left her almoſt lifeleſs; phyſicians were called in, when I returned home to curſe my officious folly, and write this letter—

Upon my ſoul, Moncraſs, Lady Mary is actually in an ill ſtate of health. I do not blame you, you are not perhaps deſerving of it—but I wiſh to the Lord the time was come when your innocence might be made known, and theſe curſed riddle-me-ree's expounded.

I am returning to St. James's place, one moment my heart bleeds for you, the next for your lady— then again I form to myſelf the miſchievous conſequences of that little vixen, Julia's elopement, a pretty figure hers, to be dancing into the world alone and unprotected, in ſearch of adventures; I am a little ſorry for your Agnes,

and

and in concluſion, wiſh you all fairly at the devil: but, dear Moncraſs, need I bid you not regard my nonſenſe? the warmth of my affection, and friendſhip for you, ſhould excuſe it. I am impatient to hear from you, and almoſt as impatient to give you a proof of my aſſiduity in your ſervice, by ſending you ſome news of your runaway—Adieu!

MELROSE.

LETTER

LETTER XLV.

Agnes de Courci to Madame St Lawrens.

London.

AH! madam, why did St. Clare, and why did you ſuffer your poor Agnes to enter a world *you* rejected? if the magnanimity of *your* ſouls, the ſtrength of *your* underſtanding, and the ſeverity of *your* virtues, were, as you often declared, too weak to defend *you* from the inſinuations of paſſion, and the temptation, as well as injuries of the wicked; why did you conſign your Agnes to the ſin, the ſorrow and regret, in which only ſhe has found this boaſted world to abound? Ever dear, and ever honored lady Abbeſs, why did you not rather keep ſo weak a creature in the boſom of your love, unknowing, and unknown, to all but yourſelf, St. Clare, and the dear ſiſterhood of our convent; how will they, and how will you tremble? not your own innate goodneſs, not the holy fervor which fills your peaceful ſouls, will ſupport you, when you are told your Agnes, the child of your adoption, is a fugitive, among ſtrangers,

ſtrangers, a wanderer in a country ſhe knows not—without one friend or protector; that the houſe of General Moncraſs is no longer her aſylum: yes, madam, I have left Belle-Vue, I have abandoned the protector to whom St. Clare conſigned me; him, in whoſe commendation I have been ſo laviſh, and I am become a voluntary exile from the charmimg ſpot, where every thing conſpired to lull me into a fancied ſecurity, and render me inſenſible to the diſgrace of my ſituation.

Is it then poſſible? can vice reſide in a boſom, apparently conſecrated to every ſocial virtue? or if not, can there be ſo much refined malice among men? are there then ſpirits who ſeek the haunts of innocence and honor, for the fell purpoſe of calumny? and are they ſuffered to dwell in ſafety, while their envenomed ſhafts ſtrike deep into the guiltleſs unoffending heart, and there wound even to death? Alas! alas! and am I alone, unknown, and unprotected, in ſuch a world, and among ſuch ſpirits—ſuch was my affright at the horrid explanation, and ſuch my eagerneſs to eſcape, that having once compaſſed what I ſo much deſired, I had no idea of a good it would not enſure, nor dread of any evil but prevention—

I had at the moment no recollection of my ſituation; it did not occur to me that I was in a foreign country; that out of the connection I was leaving, there was not in England a being to whom I could apply for protection; all *my* ideas were immerſed in the anticipation of my reception at your convent; I thought not of the ſpace of land and ſea which divided me from you; and

ſtill

ſtill leſs did I think on the means neceſſary to carry me ſo long a journey——

Money had never been of importance to me, nor influenced a ſingle act of my life; the dear friends who taught me that virtue was above price, that honor had no union with intereſt, and that true piety, and worldly wealth, were diſtinct things; forgot to *add*, we ſend you, Agnes, where you may poſſibly *hear* of the things *we* have taught you to prize, but where gold is of more importance than any of them——

I knew not the value of a louis at Paris, except to relieve the indigent; nor of an Engliſh guinea, but to raiſe the meek hearted, or chaſe poverty from the roof of induſtry.

But now I am indigent myſelf, and I write this ſhort, incoherent letter, to tell my dear Lady Abbeſs her Agnes is in diſtreſs; that ſhe waits for a remittance to enable her to return to her convent:—Oh! that I never had left it; I am among people from whoſe familiarity my heart recoils, they may be reſpectable enough in their way; but oh! how different from thoſe, whom under your ſacred protection, and at Belle-Vue, I have been uſed to aſſociate with!

I know I ſhall immediately receive a letter of credit from you, and then with what alacrity ſhall I begin the laſt journey, I truſt, I ſhall ever take —once again in the peaceful ſhelter of our dear cloyſter, never, never more, ſhall my heart or feet become wanderers.

I pant with hope and expectation; my dreams are full of you, I am continually with you, and dear St. Clare; I hear her voice, melting in tenderneſs, as ſhe prays; yes, I know ſhe joins your prayers for the poor fugitive; oh! may they

avail, may they obtain the protection of the ſaints for your

AGNES.

For reaſons I ſhall explain you muſt addreſs thus:

Louiſa Fermer, at Madame du Mitand, Great Suffolk-ſtreet, London.

LETTER

LETTER XLVI.

Agnes to M. St. Lawrens in continuation.

I Know the tenderneſs of your nature, the love you bear your Agnes, and your ſolicitude for her happineſs, too well to doubt the painful anxiety my letter muſt have created in you, or to defer letting you know my preſent ſituation, until the return of the mail; more eſpecially, as it will be ſome days, even after that, before I could perſonally unravel the hateful myſtery which obliged me to leave Belle-Vue; I feel with equal certainty, and gratitude, that while you continue in this anxious ſuſpence, you will be wretched; it is a long detail—but no matter—you will read it with indulgence; in the tedious interval, which the return of the poſt will occaſion, I ſhall have but too much leiſure, and my heart, dreadfully oppreſſed, ſeeks a motive to carry it out of itſelf. ——

When I parted with my beloved St. Clare, her laſt words to me were (after recommending me to God) "Child of my heart—my Agnes—"be not curious—ſuffer not thy peace to be diſ-"turbed by any thing which appears like myſte-"ry; time, a ſhort time will convince my child "how dear her welfare is to me—follow impli-"citly the directions of the worthy man under "whoſe protection I now ſolemnly place thee."

Did I, madam, ever diſobey that dear ſaint? a look from her has always been the ultimate rule of my actions.—She tore herſelf from my embrace, and left me fainting in the arms of General Moncraſs, who was himſelf overwhelmed with ſorrow; we proceeded (when the packet was out of ſight) in the General's carriage to London, where he placed me under the care of Madame de Vallmont, and having furniſhed me with every appendage to rank and family, left me; but this I have told you before.

Madame de Vallmont is the widow of the Chevalier de Vallmont, a gentleman of good expectations, but who from ſome family misfortunes was obliged to leave France; grief, it is thought, on that account, ſhortened his life; and his widow having ſome valuable connections in England, choſe to remain here; ſhe is ſenſible, good-tempered, and perfectly well bred; though ſhe has lived many years in this country, ſhe ſtill retains all the obliging inſinuation in her manners which diſtinguiſh the firſt ladies in Paris; at the time I had the honor of being introduced to her, her ſtile of living was genteel, but retired; her fortune, ſhe made no ſcruple to own, was very ſmall, but with it ſhe was content; nevertheleſs, the addition made to her income by the General on my account, and that of my ſuite, was both pleaſing and beneficial.

We were hardly ſettled on this agreeable plan, when Madame de Vallmont received a letter from General Moncraſs, inviting her to accompany me to Belle-Vue; and acquainting her with ſome diſagreeable domeſtic occurrences which had taken place in his family, after his departure from London.

Madame

Madame Vallmont was both grieved, and ſurpriſed, at the contents of this letter; which however ſhe did not wholly make *me* acquainted with; we made all poſſible haſte to obey the General, and reached Belle-Vue in three days. Here, madam, I found myſelf in the moſt enchanting place in the world, in the arms of a man who ſhed tears over me; who vowed to protect, to love, to be my *father*.

It was a relative my heart had never recognized; I had not, indeed, felt the want of parental protection; I had lived with my dear lady Abbeſs in the regions of peace, in the manſions of piety; but *father, I will be thy father*; oh! madam, dear St. Clare, thoſe were ſounds that ſtruck the moſt tender chords of ſenſibility, which vibrated in my heart. I bathed his hand with my tears, I could not ſpeak—but from that moment the painful ſenſe of obligation, his liberality had raiſed in my boſom, changed to unreſerved confidence, and unbounded affection; not a day paſſed but I received freſh proofs of the paternal love, with which I was ſo delighted; it was your pleaſure, madam, to have me inſtructed in the female accompliſhments taught in our convent, my proficiency far ſurpaſſed his expectations, he admired my drawings—was pleaſed to ſee me employed in my fine works—in his ſerious hours I read to him, and when, which often happened, he was penſive, my voice, he ſaid, had the power to diſſipate ſorrow, and ſoothe the jarring paſſions into peace; in ſhort, every thing I did raiſed in him pleaſure and admiration; his houſe, fortune, ſervants, nay, himſelf, ſeemed to live to oblige me—and thus paſſed five of the months ſince I

parted with you; ſo ſmooth, ſo unruffled, and yet ſo amply filled, that I had no time or inclination to penetrate the myſtery, which, as St. Clare had foretold, appeared to hang over the actions of General Moncraſs.

About this time a young man came to Belle-Vue, who was introduced to me by the General as a prodigy; he was young, ſenſible, and handſome; without ambition, and free from the influence of paſſion; he was in poſſeſſion of a very moderate fortune, with which he was ſo perfectly content, that though he had been offered, nay, urged to accept of affluence, rank, and honor, he rejected them all, and came to Belle-Vue, reſpectfully, to decline a commiſſion in the army, which had been procured for him by the General's intereſt.

I confeſs, madam, I ſaw no ſuch prodigy in all this; the man regulated his deſires by his own power; his heart retreated from a ſenſe of obligation; he formed his plan of conduct conſiſtent with the independence of his mind; he lived to *himſelf*, not to the *world*, and perfectly ſatisfied to be a reaſonable being, was content that greatneſs ſhould paſs his door; did it require any violent exertion of philoſophy to act thus? I ſhould think not; I have not, it is true, met with any in the narrow ſphere of my acquaintance with the world of this particular turn, but it is right, and how many right minds have you, my dear madam, made me mentally acquainted with? but Mr. Harley (that is his name) is leaſt amiable at firſt ſight, you only *ſee* that he is handſome, and when you are previouſly acquainted with his character, his youth, and ſelf denial, form a contraſt much to his advantage; but as you know

him

him better, you perceive there is a grace, a manner, which adorns his fine perſon, and renders it perfectly pleaſing; he is not forward in converſation, but when once drawn out, his knowledge is ſo univerſal, his judgment ſo correct, and his delivery ſo eloquent, you are diſpoſed to regret *his* ſilence, and to reſpect no other ſpeaker—and while he, without vanity or oſtentation, captivates the ear with ſentiments, in which wiſdom and elegance are blended, his countenance, at once chearful and animated, proves he is at peace with himſelf.

I had no reaſon to be vain of Mr. Harley's attention to me, and therefore perhaps was the more ſolicitous to obtain it; the Engliſh gentlemen are in general very polite, and not a little anxious to perſuade us of the aſcendancy our ſex has over them; but this young man, for ſome time, choſe to convince me, however well-bred he might be in other reſpects, politeneſs to my ſex was not his forte:—this, madam, was but for a time; it was not until after he had paid ſeveral viſits at Belle-Vue, he appeared to have formed any opinion at all of *me*; not, indeed, until the many inſtances which had come to my knowledge of the urbanity of his nature, had rendered him, in my idea, one of the firſt of men.

He ſoon became a conſtant, and welcome viſitor at Belle-Vue; the General was never better pleaſed than when in his company, and continually regretted that ſuch a fine young fellow ſhould ſeclude himſelf from the world; once, when after a ſlight indiſpoſition, he took me to air in the chariot, we ſtopped at the Hermitage, and he commiſſioned me to endeavour to prevail on the philoſopher, as we called Mr. Harley,

to give up his favourite ſyſtem, and adopt that which his friends conceived would be ſo much more to his advantage; but it was an office for which my own ſentiments by no means qualified me; I did, indeed, make *one* effort, but it was too weak to be ſucceſsful.

Why it is I cannot explain; but at this period of my narration, my heart fails me; you know me incapable of deceit, or varying from truth, but the *whole* truth now comes reluctantly from my pen; I feel an inward ſhame, (yet it is a falſe ſhame, and therefore I will conquer it) which would deſtroy the unreſerved, the natural confidence I have ever placed in the moſt reſpectable, the moſt indulgent friends that ever poor orphan was bleſt with.

What woman is blind to the paſſion ſhe inſpires? I am going to lay open all the weakneſs of my heart to you, and will not therefore begin my confeſſion with an act of diſingenuity:—I ſaw, I felt—that Edward Harley loved your Agnes; and oh! madam, pity and forgive the poor heart that *would* receive, and return his love; in ſpite of all the weak efforts of reaſon, and the dictates of duty, little apprehenſive however of the errors into which I was running, I perſuaded myſelf the partiality I felt for Mr. Harley, aroſe from a ſource as innocent as free from danger—and imputed thoſe ſenſations to friendſhip, which I was too ſoon convinced ſprung from a paſſion I wanted inclination to reſiſt, and power to conquer; I early became ſenſible of this my inexcuſeable error, but the ſame motive that condemned my thus giving way to an attachment, I feared you would diſapprove, tempted me alſo to conceal it from you,

not

not having, as you enjoined me, laid open every movement of my heart to my beloved monitreſs, I became every day more and more miſerable; time, which added to my guilt, encreaſed my compunction, but after having proceeded thus far, I could not prevail on myſelf to begin a confeſſion ſo long delayed; many were the reſolutions I made—but the offence was too ſweet —the crime too dear to be abandoned; fear, therefore, on one hand, and ſhame on the other, ever took from my faithleſs pen all power to trace the characters which form the name of—Edward Harley.

Let me not however weary my friends on a ſubject too pleaſing to myſelf: with Mr. Harley's paſſion, a melancholy viſibly encreaſed on the chearfulneſs that was wont to delight us; Madame de Vallmont diſcovered its ſource; Harley loves you, Agnes, (ſhe would ſay) poor youth! he is blind to his own danger, he knows not the obſtacles he has to ſurmount: whether ſhe communicated her obſervations to the General or not, I am yet to learn; mine, I confeſs, were ſo totally engroſſed by the alteration in the countenance, and manners of our new friend, I paid little regard to any thing elſe.

The unembarraſſed air, the ſprightly look, the florid countenance, and unapprehenſive eye, were changed into reſtraint, dejection, pale cheeks, and fearful ſadneſs; the Harley we firſt knew was no more; his ſenſes appeared to be touched, frequent abſences, during which I found he abandoned himſelf to deſpair; ſudden returns, ambiguous, yet tender expreſſions, involuntary burſts of tears and ſighs, theſe were the only proofs of love he gave your Agnes, but

theſe were irreſiſtible; and while they raiſed compaſſion, gave birth to tenderneſs; I dreaded the effect of thoſe ſtruggles of his mind, and uſed all my influence to prevail on him to accept the commiſſion which the General had before procured for him—he complied with my entreaties; oh! madam, he had no heart to oppoſe my deſires; yet when he came to bid us adieu, his agonies and diſtreſs were undeſcribable. I ſaw the fatal farewel gliſtening on his eye, and quivering on his lip—I—oh! how ſhall I own it, how confeſs to thoſe pure beings, whoſe leſſons of female delicacy and reſerve were ſo many years planted in my mind—I—yes, madam, your Agnes, the child you have ſo often claſped to your modeſt boſom, ſought an interview—made an appointment, and admitted a man to viſit her in a private part of the garden—*at midnight* ——

You tremble, you ſtart, you throw down my letter with abhorrence; you no longer conſider me as the daughter of your adoption, the child of your heart: Ah! madam, reſume my unhappy ſtory; receive again the poor Agnes to your compaſſion, and to your love; ſhe was in this inſtance impelled by an irreſiſtible impulſe; ſhe was imprudent, but not criminal; let my tears, my preſent anguiſh, expiate my firſt, my only offence, againſt the purity of your inſtructions; heinous was my crime, deep and bitter is my puniſhment.

The unhappy Edward was at the temple before me;—but how can I make, even to you, the degrading confeſſion; he appeared flushed, as if with wine, he was, it is true, agitated, but not by that dejected ſorrow, which excited my

my compaſſion; violence, not reſpect, marked his actions, he ſeized my hand.

Terrified at a change ſo aſtoniſhing, and unexpected, all the imprudence of my conduct flaſhed at once upon my recollection.

The moon ſhone very bright, and the radiant beams of that chaſte planet, which gliſtened through the foliage of the ſurrounding trees, ſerved at once to reproach and animate me; fear, it is true, filled my heart, but the bluſh of indignation glowed on my cheek.

How ſtrong is the force of virtue! how eaſily reſumed are the habits of propriety! Mr. Harley trembled at the ſilent agony of my looks; he fell at my feet, deplored my reſentment, called heaven and earth to witneſs the ardour of his love, vowed, wept, and—yes, madam, he dared to ſolicit me to fly with him: Ah! what would I not have given that I had authoriſed *his* temerity by *my own* imprudence!

To repeat all that paſſed at this painful interview is impoſſible; let me therefore haſten to the important, the dreadful explanation——

My meaning, but dear Lady Abbeſs, but I feel the folly of the expreſſion, what young creature who ſuffers paſſion to conquer reaſon, can develope her own meaning?

My intention then, as far as I am myſelf acquainted with it, in giving Harley this meeting, was to have reaſoned him out of the dejection that appeared to over-power his faculties; and by perſuading him to enter into the world, on equal terms with other people, to meliorate that extreme ſenſibility, which, depending on my own foreſight, I concluded would be the ruin of his peace; when therefore he had the confidence to

urge

urge me to a flight with him, I felt my degradation, and was aſhamed of my fancied wiſdom; ſelf-condemned, and ſhocked at my own deviation from delicacy, I loſt all concern for him, in fear for myſelf, and wiſhed immediately to retire.

My indignation at his propoſal, and the ſcorn in my countenance, which however was levelled at myſelf, appeared to pique him.

His fortune, he ſaid, ſmall as it was, would ſupport us.

I ſtarted and again attempted to leave him; but, no, madam! no reſpect was due to me; the virgin pride that ſwelled in my boſom, the offended innocence that animated my countenance, appeared to him the effects of art and affectation; how ſhall I tell you? how wound St. Clare with the horrid repetition? he conſidered me as the wanton favorite of General Moncraſs, the companion of his looſe hours; do you comprehend me, madam? his miſtreſs.

The world, common fame, and even the domeſtics of Belle-Vue, all, he had the barbarity to tell me, looked on me in that light: Alas! do not the lucid drops of compaſſion flow from your eyes? do you not conceive that the agonies I felt, and ſtill feel, have expiated the act of imprudence I was guilty of in meeting him?

What I ſuffered, or how I ſupported myſelf, the Being who witneſſed the hateful calumny, only knows; I did not weep, nor ſpeak, my heart was burſting—With all the energy, all the dignity of innate honor; Mr. Harley then abandoned his firſt pleas for favour to himſelf, and entreated me to fly from Belle-Vue, from Moncraſs, from guilt; I did not yet weep—my heart

heart was too full—he offered me an aſylum with his ſiſter, a woman of amiable and unblemiſhed character, who would, he ſaid, protect me: Lady Moncraſs, the nobleſt, beſt of women, whoſe peace had been deſtroyed——

Oh! my venerable monitreſs! beloved St. Clare! by what fatality was I given to the protection of this man? was it neceſſary my entrance into the world ſhould be marked by ſuch a humiliating injury? Is it your Agnes, the humble diſciple of rectitude; her, to whoſe utmoſt wiſh the grate of your convent was a welcome boundary? Is it her, who inverts the connubial bleſſing? who breaks the heart and domeſtic comfort of a lady, not more reſpected for her rank, than admired for her many virtues; one who is, confeſſedly, the ornament of her country?

I had been told the General was a married man, and that ſome family diſputes had ſeparated him from his wife: I imputed the many melancholy hours he paſſed to that cauſe; I heard him ſigh, I ſaw the unbidden tear roll down his cheeks; how often have I prayed for reſt to his mind, how often thought ill of a woman who could treat ſuch a man with unkindneſs; but little indeed could I ſuſpect *myſelf* to be the cauſe of their unhappy diviſion.

But to return; tender regret for my ſuppoſed miſerable fate, ſucceeded admonitions, which were dictated by unſullied honor.

Oh, Agnes! (cried he) wringing his hands, how ſhall I wean my ſoul from its dotage on thy perfections? I leave thee, I go to explore a world I abhor—I ſeek to loſe thy image in the multitude; but I know, I feel, how vain the attempt,

attempt; wert thou but innocent, to *toil*, to *die* for thee, would be luxury; but remember the warning I give thee; let not the bloom of thy life be devoted to guilt, let not the faſcination of thy ſenſes in the preſent moment rob thee of all the bleſſings of a long futurity; let it not cheat thee of *comfort*, of innocence; leave thy ſeducer: what though he is noble, brave, benevolent—amiable—and rich, think of the pangs his infidelity inflicts on the heart of a virtuous woman, who adores him; think alſo that thou, the faireſt maſter-piece of nature art an accomplice in his guilt; that thy ſoul, which the creator has ſo divinely adorned with every grace that is eſtimable in woman, inſtead of being a temple of virtue, is the ſeat of—— he ſtopped, and throwing himſelf on a bench, ſobbed aloud.

Unable any longer to ſuppreſs the violence of my emotions, and unwilling to enter into explanations with one, who by his contemptible opinion of me, rendered himſelf unworthy my regard, I haſtily left the temple, and returned to the houſe with the utmoſt ſpeed.——

And now, my dear honoured friends, you have before you the motives which induced me to leave Belle-Vue: but I did not take ſo important a ſtep, without fully informing myſelf of the horrid tale I heard from Harley.

The orphan girl who attended me is innocence itſelf; I was very much embarraſſed how to enter on ſuch a ſubject with her, but my delicacy was needleſs—it was a reſpect I might owe my own feelings, but was not in this caſe due to hers, ſince I found that not only the domeſtics of the houſe, but the whole country, received

ceived it as an indiſputable fact—that I was the General's miſtreſs; and not only ſo, but that my guilt was aggravated by the diſſention I had cauſed between him and Lady Mary.

I remarked to you in the firſt letter I wrote from Belle-Vue, that I thought very few families of diſtinction dwelt in that part of the country, as we had not many male, and no female viſitors: See now a reaſon why ſolitude, which rendered it a thouſand times more charming to me, reigned in the houſe and gardens of Belle-Vue.

Mortified at the reflection, tired of the hateful ſubject, ſick of the world, and diſpleaſed with myſelf, permit me, dear Lady Abbeſs, here to conclude this long letter; I underſtand nothing of the mails—when they go out, or when they arrive; as I ſhall therefore only give vent to the ſorrows that oppreſs me, before I again reſume my pen, two packets may poſſibly reach you together from your unhappy

AGNES.

LETTER

LETTER XLVII.

Agnes in continuation.

I HAD ordered Peggy to ſit up until my return from the garden, and I now threw myſelf on the bed in the preſence of the affrighted girl, and gave way to the agonies that diſtracted me; in my firſt tranſports of grief, I called on St. Clare, on you, reproached you for expoſing me to ſuch inſults, then again implored you in the tendereſt terms to relieve, to protect, and to juſtify me; at length, after exhauſting myſelf by the exceſs of my paſſion and indignation—I began ſeriouſly to revolve in my mind the whole tenor of General Moncraſs's conduct to me, from the time of his taking me under his protection to that hour.

I could have no doubt of the truth of what Harley had juſt told me; it was confirmed by my own ſervant, whoſe veracity I never had reaſon to ſuſpect; and by a thouſand concurrent circumſtances, which now ruſhed on my memory; yet notwithſtanding all this, I could not help doing juſtice to the delicacy of the General's behaviour at all times towards me: I could not recollect a ſingle circumſtance which would have alarmed the ſtricteſt, or even the moſt ſuſpicious purity—if I was ill he watched over me with the tendereſt, and moſt paternal ſolicitude; my recovery ever afforded him the ſtrongeſt

ſtrongeſt ſatisfaction, and my wiſhes, whenever he could make himſelf acquainted with them, were anticipated: you, madam, by your example, made your Agnes a ſtrict obſerver of countenances; and I had even flattered myſelf that I had acquired ſome of your ſagacity in forming the judgment, which was the reſult of thoſe obſervations—it was always a particular pleaſure to me, to read the heart of General Moncraſs in his face—it had all the ſimplicity of the character you ſo much admire in the celebrated Engliſh writer, and all the fire, wit, and tenderneſs of Sterne himſelf: not once, no not once, did I perceive a trace of duplicity in it—when I compared his paternal conduct towards me, with what I had always conceived of true fatherly affection, a thought darted acroſs my imagination, which for a few moments involved me in perplexity of another kind: St. Clare has often told me, and you, dear lady Abbeſs, as often confirmed it, that I was of honourable and noble birth, although it was neceſſary, for prudential reaſons, to conceal my origin, even from myſelf.

"Be not curious, Agnes, ſeek not to pene-
"trate the myſtery which may appear to cloud
"the actions of the worthy man in whoſe pro-
"tection I place you," ſaid my beloved St. Clare; ah! thought I, Moncraſs is then my father; this ſurmiſe, confirmed by *his* conduct, and by my own feelings, was, I for a moment fancied, founded on reaſon; but a ſecond thought bade me give up that idea as viſionary; the General had been married twice; I could not be the daughter of Leonora Sebaſtion, his firſt wife; and my age was a ſufficient proof,

as

as well as Lady Mary's diſpleaſure on my account, that I was not hers: if, therefore, I had any filial claims on the General, they muſt have been illegitimate, and could not then be either *noble* or *honorable*; ſo that I was obliged to relinquiſh that ſurmiſe, as equally chimerical with many other preceding ones.

But what was to be done?

Should the ſun riſe on Agnes de Courci under the roof of a man who was deemed the ſeducer of her innocence, and who was accuſed of violating every moral, and ſocial duty in his protection of her? ſhould ſhe meet the eyes of his domeſtics, fixed on her as an object of infamy? the meaneſt of whom might ſay—this woman is our miſtreſs—we obey, but we alſo deſpiſe her—behold her gaudy trappings, they are the price of her honor; we are not ſo fine, but we are leſs guilty than her: Ah! St. Clare! this was not one of the myſteries you forbade me to develope; and thus fore-armed, ſhould any latent deſign, hoſtile to virtue, really lie concealed under a maſk of tender regard; would not you, would not my own heart condemn me, had I ſtaid to tempt my fate, until it was too late to eſcape the danger? this laſt reflection determined me; I feigned to have recompoſed my ſpirits, ſaid I was ſleepy, and bid Peggy retire.

I know not whether it is the general cuſtom of the country, or whether it is only in the neighbourhood of Belle-Vue, that the maſter is beloved, not feared by his vaſſals; hard fare, and impregnable honeſty, appear to me to be the hereditary rights of the Engliſh peaſant; no locks or bars are neceſſary to protect the property of the rich, or the perſons of the poor,

at leaſt in the demeſne of Belle-Vue, ſuch was the mutual confidence, between the inmates and the neighbourhood, that the drawing a ſlight bolt, and ſometimes not that, was deemed a ſufficient night ſecurity; having therefore once formed my reſolution, I had no difficulties in putting them in execution, but thoſe which aroſe in my own mind.

Never, never, ſhall I know reſt until I find it in your arms; untill I receive your pardon, and once more hear the ſaint-like voice of St. Clare melt in fondneſs over her

AGNES.

LETTER

LETTER XLVIII.

Agnes in continuation.

I Continue to write to my only friends, certain that I ſhall, as ſoon as the poſſible return of any conveyance will admit it, be furniſhed with means of returning to your dear, and *now* dearer than ever, convent; becauſe I am ſure you are ſolicitous to know the whole of a ſtory, which though it may in ſome parts deſerve your juſt reprehenſion, yet it is your Agnes who confeſſes her faults, who caſts herſelf at your feet for pardon; and whoſe errors, however enormous, are at this moment puniſhed more ſeverely, than her partial friends would perhaps think adequate to her offence.

I quitted Belle-Vue with a certain undeſcribable heavineſs of heart, which had I not felt the propriety of the act, would have deprived me of the reſolution, and preſence of mind, which only could ſupport me in the ſtep I was taking.

I have before acquainted you with the ſituation of this noble building; it has a ſouth aſpect, and commands a moſt delightful view of the fertile valley, to which from the houſe you ſee no end; it is defended from the north wind by a range of uplands, and on each ſide it is adorned with beautiful

beautiful plantations, which, though raiſed by a ſkilful gardener, appear to be the ſpontaneous work of nature; at the extremity of thoſe plantations are gravel walks, bordered by the moſt delicious flowery banks, whoſe verdure are preſerved by the conſtant lavings of two clear ſtreams, whoſe natural windings beautify, as well as repleniſh the whole valley: the great road leads cloſe by the park palings at the back of the houſe; ſo far I knew the way I meant to go, and ſo far I proceeded with tolerable reſolution.

Let me endeavour to deſcribe to you, deareſt madam, my ſenſations, when from the window of the General's apartment, where the curtains were not let down, I ſaw him walk about in a diſturbed manner, and by the lights which ſtood on the writing table, I could perceive him often attempting either to read or write, then ſuddenly riſe, and continue traverſing the room.

All his kindneſs at that inſtant recured to my memory, his voice, his look, his parental tenderneſs, rendered more intereſting by the apparent anxiety of his mind at this moment, filled me with the moſt painful regret.

Cruel Harley! cried I, burſting into tears, why haſt thou torn the veil from my delighted eyes? what to me where the cenſures of the barbarous, ill-judging world? when in the ſecurity of my own innocence, and reſting in full confidence on the honor and integrity of my generous protector, my utmoſt ambition was to contribute to his happineſs, and my fondeſt wiſh to give thee peace; what is now my purſuit? what the conſequence of this raſh elopement? I add to the ſorrows which already deprive him of reſt, and I tear myſelf from *thee* for ever.——

Still

Still were my flowing eyes fixed on the window; one inſtance of the General's tenderneſs ſucceeded another on my memory; my heart ſunk at the retroſpect; I was on the point of returning, when the idea that his preſent uneaſineſs might proceed from his diſunion from his wife, and that the cauſe once removed, the effect would alſo ceaſe; I turned my reluctant eyes away, and proceeded on my loneſome journey; then in the tumult of my mind, your figure and that of St. Clare appeared to my mental view.

What, ſaid my dear monitreſs, haſt thou, Agnes, ſeen the beloved St. Clare dying a living death, her bloom waſting, her beauteous form ſhrinking from the wounds of calamity; her eyes weeping night and day for offences *ſhe* had not committed; reſigning herſelf with patience to ſickneſs and ſorrow? thus depreſſed, broken-hearted, and almoſt expiring—would *ſhe*, thinkeſt thou, have heſitated, whether to leave a terreſtrial paradiſe, or ſtay in it, to endanger her own honor; to acquieſce in the moſt injurious calumny, and wound the feelings of a virtuous wife?

Ah! no, cried I; St. Clare would in my ſituation, have taken the very ſteps her Agnes has now done: ſhe would haſten from the ſcene of ſuch complicated ills, ſhe would fly from a man whoſe tenderneſs was at beſt but equivocal; ſhe would reject every advantage that wore the guiſe of diſhonor.

Thus, madam, did I reconcile to my own heart the pain I knew I ſhould inflict on the General; and thus did I re-animate my ſinking courage, until having paſt the ſummit of the hill, I had wholly, and perhaps for ever, loſt ſight of Belle-Vue.

I now found the benefit of the exerciſe I am

ſo

ſo fond of, having walked near ten miles before the ſun roſe; when feeling myſelf weary, and my ſpirits, from their unuſual exertions, nearly exhauſted, I accoſted a poor woman who was placing her ſpinning-wheel at the door of a hut, that could hardly be diſtinguiſhed by the name of houſe; I entreated ſhe would ſuffer me to reſt, and get me a diſh of tea, for which I promiſed her ample payment.

She very courteouſly ſhewed me in, but in a barbarous and uncouth corruption of the Engliſh language, took great pains to convince me that though many of her neighbours, who were no better to paſs than heſelf, had, forſooth, got the cuſtom of drinking that ſlip-ſlop ſtuff—*ſhe* never had, nor ever would ſuffer it to enter her dwelling; but ſhe readily put before me her brown loaf, a few eggs, ſome butter-milk, and a wooden diſh filled with whey; I took a draught of the latter, and an egg, and laid down on the pallet from whence my hoſteſs was but juſt riſen, whoſe kindneſs abundantly compenſated for the rudeneſs of her dialect, and the hardneſs of her fare.

It was in vain I endeavoured to compoſe myſelf to reſt, my mind was too much agitated; but as my feet were exceedingly bliſtered, and I found myſelf unable to purſue my journey, I lay ſome hours a prey to reflections I cannot deſcribe.

My hoſteſs, who appeared to be about ſixty, and very far from that robuſt make which characteriſes the peaſants of this country, lamented ſhe had no better bed for me, aſſured me I ſhould be mainly welcome if ſhe had, for that I was the tighteſt laſs ſhe had ſeen many a day, and ſure, and ſure if ſhe had a golden bed, ſhe ſhould not think it was too good for me.

Are

Are you not charmed, madam, with this artleſs creature? her ſong as ſhe ſat ſpinning, which but for the benevolence of her nature I ſhould call a horrible ſcream, was interrupted by my ſighs, and ſhe attributed my reſtleſſneſs to her hard pallet; happy mortal! ſhe could conceive no other cauſe, which after walking all night, ſhould prevent my ſleeping.

This woman was a ſtrange compoſition, wherein the extremes of humanity and indifference were blended; ſhe ſaw me weep, and her own tears were ready to ſtart; ſhe was very eager to do me any kind office, and even offered to go to a neighbour's, as ſhe called a houſe two miles off, and borrow not only crockery; but tea—ſugar ſhe had, as ſhe proved by ſhewing me a yellow porringer full of ſome very coarſe, and moiſt, which ſhe told me ſhe always kept for poſſet, in caſe ſhe ſhould be ſick; yet though ſhe was thus kind and attentive to every thing ſhe thought would contribute to my eaſe, ſhe expreſſed not the leaſt curioſity either by looks or words, at the ſingular appearance I made; my dreſs, which was a plain muſlin chemiſe, tied with green, muſt have been ſuperior to any thing ſhe had ſeen, yet I could not obſerve in her an atom of curioſity, or the leaſt deſire to be acquainted with any thing about me, but my looks; which ſhe aſſured me, over and over, pleaſed her hugely.

She aſked me if I was a maiden body; and on being anſwered in the affirmative, bid me keep ſo and not mind the men, of whom in the world there were but two ſorts, the falſe-hearted—and the good-for-nothing—and ſhe thanked God, days, weeks, and ſometimes months paſſed, without her ſeeing any of them.

This

This piece of intelligence rendered me perfectly eaſy in my ſituation; but I profited ſo little by her good example, that I really felt great curioſity to know her hiſtory.

She had, (ſhe ſaid) had her ſhare of trouble—but it was all compriſed in one, and one only remarkable incident, which brought a glow of reſentment into her cheeks: ſhe had been in her youthful days plighted to a neighbouring huſbandman, who had forſaken her in all her bridal finery, the ſavings of three years ſervitude, at the church door and enliſted for a ſoldier——

And what became of the wretch? ſaid I.

Oh! he was either killed abroad, anſwered ſhe very compoſedly—or hanged at London—no matter which—then walking very leiſurely up to a large brown cheſt, ſhe opened it, and taking the things it contained out, one by one, ſhewed me her bridal ſuit, which ſhe ſaid ſhe had never worn ſince her firſt and laſt diſappointment, but kept it as a warning to all the young maidens that came to her houſe.

What will you ſay, madam, when you are told that while this good creature was thus gratifying her pique to the men, and ſeeking to amuſe me, I formed a ſcheme to rob her of thoſe valuable reliques?

I had reaſon to expect, that as ſoon as my elopement was diſcovered at Belle Vue, the General would at leaſt wiſh to inform himſelf of the route I had taken; and perhaps too, for never more will I conceal a thought from my only friends, Harley might fancy himſelf intereſted in my fate—Ingrate! *my* imagination had deified *him*, *his* had reduced *me* to the loweſt contempt.

I was ſure the cloaths would fit me, and that I ſhould in them paſs through the country towns in my way to N——, where I remembered to have ſeen the London ſtages ſtop when I was going to Belle-Vue, without exciting curioſity, which it was of importance to me to avoid.

After paſſing that day and the next night with the good old maiden, I pretended a head-ach, and accepted her offer to go to her neighbour's, and borrow the tea and crockery; which ſhe chearfully undertook to do, at the ſame time, I charged her not to ſay any thing about me.

Why child, ſaid ſhe, what can I ſay of you? if you are as good as you look, I can ſay no harm; and if you be *worſe*, it muſt be ſomebody wiſer than Cicely to find you out; and ſo, child, make yourſelf eaſy, and away tripped the old dame.

The inſtant ſhe was gone, I began my operations, and in ten minutes ſet out from the cottage quite a country laſs, in a fine flowered linen gown, pink petticoat, ſtraw hat, and white cloth cloak; my ſattin ſhoes I changed for a pair of black leather pumps, and drew on a pair of pink ſtockings, with white clocks, over my own ſilk ones; my hair was fortunately out of powder, but I found the moſt difficult part in my whole dreſs, was that of tucking it all under the round-eared cap; I left my muſlin dreſs, and all the reſt of my cloaths in the cheſt, from whence I had taken thoſe belonging to Cicely, with one guinea out of three I had in my purſe, and fully ſatisfied with myſelf, although I had put ſuch a trick upon my hoſteſs, made the beſt of my way towards the great road.

I had

I had not walked half a mile before I met two of the General's domeſtics on horſeback, whom I afterwards heard had been deſcribing my perſon and dreſs, and making enquiries after me in the next and neighbouring villages.

Imagine, madam, my anxiety when, on looking back, I ſaw one of them ſtrike out of the high road, and make directly towards the cottage I had juſt quitted; fortunately Cicely was not returned, and I had left no traces behind me that could lead to a diſcovery of my having been there, except my cloaths which were not in ſight; however I quickened my pace, and had the pleaſure to ſee, on looking behind me ſome time after, the man who I concluded had ſatisfied himſelf by ſearching the old woman's cottage, had rejoined his companion.

I entered the firſt village with fear and trembling, but to my infinite joy paſſed it unobſerved, and preſently met a kind of carrier of goods to the next town, who offered to place me between his panniers, and convey me there for two ſhillings; I accordingly mounted, and though it was a moſt uneaſy ſeat, found it a much more pleaſing method of travelling than the pedeſtrian one I had been obliged to ſet out with.

It was late in the evening when we got to the end of our day's journey; my guide put up at a miſerable houſe he called an inn, but which was not a bit ſuperior to old Cicely's hut in convenience and accommodation, and very much inferior to it in every degree of cleanlineſs.

From hence I procured a man and double horſe to take me to N——, five and thirty miles, which we travelled the next day, and my guide, by my directions, took me to the inn from

whence the London carriages ſet out; I ſlept that night very comfortably, enjoying for the firſt time, ſince I left Belle-Vue, the luxury of a good bed and decent apartment: in the morning, while I was enquiring of the landlord, whether there were any nearer road to France than through London, a footman in livery accoſted me in French, and informed me that, although there were ſeveral ſea-ports from whence I might procure a paſſage to the continent much nearer to N—— than the metropolis; yet that the veſſels were ſo uncertain, I might be detained a month before any ſailed—on the contrary, if I went through London, I might either go in a French trader from thence, or travel by land to Dover, from whence the paſſage was very ſhort—I thanked him for his information, and immediately enquired when the ſtage ſet out to London, and what was the fare. Imagine, my dear lady Abbeſs, my conſternation and embarraſſment, when I found that the whole contents of my purſe were inſufficient to defray the expences of the journey; the man perceived my confuſion, and adviſed me to ride outſide, which was ſeconded by the coachman, who added ſome coarſe jokes on my pretty perſon.

I retired into the room I had left in the utmoſt anxiety; I had not a ſingle reſource from the anguiſh of my own reflections, and now ſeverely felt the ill conſequences of my improvident thoughtleſſneſs in leaving Belle-Vue, where my cabinet was never in a ſtate of poverty, without a ſufficient ſum of money for travelling expences; I had, it is neceſſary for me to tell you, though I did not at *that* time recollect it myſelf, a pair of pearl bracelets, with diamond claſps, which the General had preſented to me, and inſiſted on putting

putting on my arms the very day I left Belle-Vue; theſe I had worn in compliment to him until I retired after ſupper, and then only took them off to put them in the caſe, which I had in my pocket, the moment before I left my apartment to meet Harley—but this circumſtance had totally eſcaped my memory; and having left my buckles in my ſhoes at old Cicely's, I had nothing I could ſell to aſſiſt me in my preſent exigence:—While I was ruminating on my unhappy ſituation, the ſame footman who had accoſted me in the inn yard, came to deſire I would go to his miſtreſs, who wiſhed to ſpeak with me.

Not a little ſurpriſed at this meſſage, I followed him into one of the beſt apartments in the inn, where I found a lady with a fine child on her lap, about three years old; who told me with great civility and good-nature in French—that hearing I could ſpeak the language, and wanted a conveyance to France, ſhe ſent for me to offer to bear my expences to London, if I would undertake the care of her child; that ſhe had brought his nurſe with them into the country, who had unfortunately been taken ill, and their engagements requiring their return to town, they were obliged to leave her behind them; that the child was become ſo fretful at the loſs of his nurſe, and not being able to converſe, or amuſe himſelf in the Engliſh language, ſhe was ſinking under the fatigue of attending him.

Well, madam, you will not doubt my acceptance of this offer; behold, therefore, now your Agnes entered on the humble office of nurſe, Louiſa, her name, to maſter Mitard; the child was naturally good-tempered, he had been fretted by being conſigned to the care of ſtrangers, whoſe language he did not underſtand, and

grew proportionably fonder of me, with whom he could hold his little parleys; and his mamma was ſo delighted at being relieved from the fatigue of attending to him, that ſhe inſiſted on paying the charge I had already incurred at the inn, and that I ſhould immediately conſider myſelf as one of her family; I purchaſed a change of linen at N—, and after a journey, which had it not been for the ſecret anxiety of my mind, would have been far from unpleaſant, we arrived in Suffolk-ſtreet on the third day after our leaving N——.

Monſieur and Madame Mitard were very averſe to the thoughts of parting with me, the child would not be ſatisfied when I was out of his ſight, and they entreated me to continue, at leaſt until they heard the fate of their old nurſe, or could procure a new one to anſwer their purpoſe.

I had not money to defray my expences to France, my poverty therefore as the Engliſh bard expreſſes it, but not my will conſented, for my ſituation became much leſs agreeable here than on the journey; yet as I had no alternative but to wait until I heard from you, and was entirely unconnected and unknown in this city, which is larger and far more popular than Paris, where, conſidering the ſtate of my finances could I have been more eligibly ſituated? I therefore conſented to ſtay, not until the recovery of their nurſe, but until I ſhould receive a letter from my friends at Paris.

It was four days before I diſcovered the profeſſion of Monſieur and Madame Mitard, they are Opera performers; Madame dances and Monſieur ſings; they had been in the North of England at a rural fete, given on account of the marriage

marriage of a nobleman in that part of the world, and were on their return to London, when I, ſo fortunately met with them.

I have not given Mr. du Mitard the leaſt reaſon to ſuſpect, from my own conduct, that I am of rank ſuperior to my appearance; he has nevertheleſs rallied me on my dreſs, which he ſays, he is ſure is a diſguiſe: you ſhall never perſuade me, Louiſa, he cries, thoſe luxurious ringlets have always been confined to ſo narrow a compaſs; then your hand and arm, there are many a ducheſs who would be proud to exchange with you—come, come, confeſs, a lover is at the bottom of all this; how ſhould a young perſon of your figure be dropped as it were out of the elements in ſuch a part of the world?

Shocking, cries Madame, my nerves were totally deranged by the horrid bores we met with there; certainly, Louiſa, you have been engaged in ſome adventures: ſhe then obligingly preſſes me to change my dreſs, and offers to ſupply me either from her own wardrobe, or with money to purchaſe cloaths more ſuitable to the ſphere, ſhe is perſuaded, I have been uſed to move in.

Were I adept enough in diſſimulation, to perſuade them their conjectures are entirely devoid of foundation, I ſhould thereby be deprived of an advantage of great importance to me at preſent, which is that of eating at their table, as I muſt elſe take my meals with their footman and cook.

Madame is, I fancy, much admired—ſhe is viſited by many noblemen who pay her high compliments, which ſhe receives with the eaſe of a woman, to whom the incenſe of flattery is not new: among the reſt is a young lord, to whom ſhe inſiſted on introducing me, what had paſſed

between them I know not, but he looked ſurpriſed: whether at my dreſs, as to be ſure Cicely's wedding ſuit is a little particular, or at the ſtory they think proper to ſuppoſe for me, or perhaps a little of both.

This lord, who is really very conceited, ſaluted me by the appellation of beautiful nurſe, ſaid a thouſand nothings in French, ſhewed his white teeth, played with the child a long while, and, at parting, gave him a paper which he bade him preſent to his nurſe to buy pins; it was an Engliſh bank note for twenty pounds; I could not conceal either my ſurpriſe or anger.

Madame Mitard laughed—his lordſhip, ſhe ſaid, meant to preſent me with it, to purchaſe a more becoming dreſs.

My face was in a glow—I burſt into tears—ſcorn and indignation flaſhed from my eyes—what, madam, at that moment, were my ſenſations?

Madame Mitard ſtared—ſhe is really very impenetrable; the wonder in her looks, reminded me of my ſituation—I had no right to deport myſelf ſo haughtily, was I not a dependant—a ſervant?

The ſenſe of my fallen ſituation, the uncertainty when I might hear from you, the further mortifications I might be ſubject to in Madame Mitard's family, and the different ſcenes I might be expoſed to if I left it—all ſtruck ſo forcibly on my mind, that it took from me the power of utterance.

I ſunk on the floor without motion.

Madame Mitard's nerves are very ſtrong—mine the reverſe—ſhe therefore never carries eau-de luce

eau-de-luce—but ſhe knew I did, and ſearching my pocket for the bottle, drew out, by what accident ſhe has not ſaid, the ſhagreen caſe with my bracelets.

The reſpect of thoſe little people was wonderfully increaſed by the ſight of the jewels; they inſiſted I ſhould no longer conſider myſelf as their dependant; they had *always* thought, and were *now* convinced I was a perſon of rank—they beſought I would honor them by partaking their humble means, until my affairs (however deranged) were accommodated.

Madame again intreated I would accept from her money to purchaſe cloths more ſuitable to my rank, and which wou'd prevent my being an object of curioſity——

The laſt conſideration was of moſt weight with me—yet I could not bear to accept pecuniary obligations from thoſe people, and ſo at at length I plainly told them.

Ciel Mademoiſelle, replied Madame, why will you talk of incurring obligation, with ſuch riches in your poſſeſſion, glancing her eyes at the bracelets—in ſhort, madam, the jewels were valuable—and Monſieur knew how to diſpoſe of them; he carried them to a perſon who lives by this ſort of traffic with the neceſſitous, and brought me twenty guineas, with right to redeem my jewels whenever it is in my power.

I have purchaſed ſome white dreſſes, and a few neceſſaries juſt to appear in.

Madame Mitard undertakes to return Lord Morden his note—and now, I wait with inconceivable impatience to hear from you; if you have wrote by the firſt return of the

mail—I am told I ſhall receive your letter in two days—oh! how I deſire, yet dread to know your ſentiments on the ſtep I have taken, on the whole of my conduct; if you acquit me, I know God will do the ſame; and then you and St. Clare will take to your beloved hearts your own

AGNES.

LETTER

LETTER XLIX.

Agnes in continuation.

Suffolk-Street.

THE day is paſt on which I was informed I might have heard from Paris: I have already learnt to diſtinguiſh the two loud knocks, which announce the poſtman's approach; he paſſed our door, yet ſo ſtrong was my confidence that you had wrote, I prevailed on Mr. Mitard to go to the general office, and examine whether any miſtake had deprived me of the conſolation, to know I was yet dear to you; to-morrow, they ſay, your letter may arrive; oh! that this country could afford me a little cell, where I might ſhut out the world, and pray for you until then: Oh! my prophetic fears! St. Clare!—but I cannot bear the ſuppoſition—however unhappy your Agnes may be in your diſpleaſure, you will not reject her fond petitions, to be again taken to your boſom; nor abandon her to her fate; however ſhe may deſerve it—my St. Clare, I know, loves only her God, and you, better than her adopted child.

It is now twenty-ſix days ſince I left Belle-Vue, it is yet longer ſince I have heard from you; what may not have happened in that ſpace, to you, to St. Clare; you are, it is true, happily exempted from all the evils, which in the great world are the ſource of temptation, and the

the offsprings of paſſion; your ſerene lives are undiſturbed by the turbulence of vain wiſhes, and the fear of imaginary evils; ſecure of the rich reward, due to your piety and virtue, you tread with confidence, and fortitude, the path which leads to the "heaven of heavens;" but though your ſouls are ſanctified, even in this ſtate of mortality, how many bodily complaints are you not ſubject to!

What a languid ſtate was poor St. Clare in, when ſhe tore herſelf from my embrace; how had her ſweet countenance ſuffered within the the laſt year, and how wounding to me were the groans which pain extorted from her?

Alas! when I think of this, and fancy it poſſible you have journeyed to Abberville to render the laſt kind office to her, I am loſt in anguiſh.

Again, induſtrious to torment myſelf, I reflect, that notwithſtanding *your* happy ſtate of health, and your ſtill more even mind, it is alſo poſſible that *you* may be attacked by ſome dangerous indiſpoſition, which preys on you with the more violence, from your heretofore excellent conſtitution.

Theſe are my fears for *you* my only friends, for *myſelf* they are innumerable.

I do not by any means like my preſent ſituation; Madame Mitard adds to the ſprightly naïveté of our French ladies, a levity, and coquetry that diſguſts me extremely; ſhe is at times groſs in her converſation, and rude in her repartees, particularly to gentlemen; but as theſe are diverted by her ſallies, and are conſtantly making her little preſents, ſhe is contented to believe they admire her, without troubling herſelf

herſelf to diſtinguiſh whether they laugh *with* or *at* her; ſhe is diſpleaſed when I look grave, and ſays I am a ſly prude, a character *ſhe* deteſts—but *her* opinion of *me* is of ſmall importance to *my* peace, *mine* of *her* is a diſtinct affair.

As I have before told you, they are viſited by many men of rank; the greateſt inconvenience of my ſituation, ſince they have thought proper to conſider me as their equal, is the obligation politeneſs lays on me to attend Madame Mitard in the room, where ſhe receives her company; we have very few female friends, Madame Mitard diſlikes her own ſex in general—and Engliſh women, in particular, ſhe deſpiſes; that ſentiment might perhaps be reciprocal, if ſhe were much known to them.

Is it not very provoking, madam, to be obliged to hear all the impertinence men, who (as they fancy themſelves our ſuperiors) think they have an excluſive right to utter?

I have however abſolutely refuſed to be ſeen abroad with Madame Mitard, and notwithſtanding ſhe is extremely angry, am determined to adhere to my reſolution—no, Madam! Madame Mitard is not a chaperon for *your Agnes*——

* * * * * *

Madame Mitard undertook to return Lord Morden's note, may I own without incuring the cenſure of your upright heart, for my want of candour, that I ſuſpect ſhe has not kept her word?

That young nobleman treats me with a freedom unuſual in this country; he adopts, he ſays, when

when I am diſpleaſed, the manners of mine; and following Madame Mitard's example, thinks vivacity and delicacy are not to be found blended in a French education; this is an error (and a very illiberal one you will allow) which I have found to be prevalent among the few of the *common* order of beings, with whom I have been in any degree converſant, ſince I have been in England; but it is of too groſs a nature to be adopted by any of thoſe of a ſuperior caſt, I am therefore not eaſily reconciled to an apology ſo abſurdly founded, nor is my opinion of this nobleman at all raiſed by his contracted ideas.

Lord Morden is no favorite with me; he is introduced to my knowledge, at a period very unfavorable for a man of the world; the contraſt between him and thoſe I have been uſed to converſe with is too ſtriking.

General Moncraſs is the very eſſence of politeneſs and good breeding; there is a manly and graceful turn in his manner, which even when he condeſcends to trifle, takes from him all appearance of frivolity; in his moſt lively ſallies *he* is a ſtranger to that——

" ——————— *lawleſs joy,*
" *Which pains the ſage ear, and hurts the ſober eye.*"

He is the only man I ever ſaw, who retained the lively, and undeviating attention to our ſex, which we always meet with in France from well-bred men; and yet was ſo particularly happy

py in his judgment, as to preſerve the appearance of a feeling ſincerity in his compliments, without ſacrificing his good ſenſe; in ſhort the cap of Minerva reſted on his temples, while

"*Words ſweet as honey from his lips diſtil'd.*"

And then Edward Harley, what an humble elegance was there in that young man's addreſs, what eloquence and grace in his converſation, and what propriety marked his judgment; his face was the true index to his mind, and whether it was adorned with the glow of ſenſibility, the bluſh of modeſty, or the enamation of joy; whether it was animated with hope, oppreſſed with grief, or clouded with deſpair, all his ſenſations were founded on rectitude, and had honour for their guide; ſuch is Edward Harley: —I think of him as one I have known, and forgive me, dear madam, if I add, one whom I have *loved*, but am no more to behold—one is for ever loſt to me, but whoſe image will live in my heart, until I follow your ſteps, and thoſe of dear St. Clare, and offer my humble vow on the altar of him, who made Edward Harley what he is.

Lord Morden is tall, genteel, and they ſay generally reckoned handſome. Madame Mitard ſays he has fine eyes; but confident indeed muſt the woman be who could examine them; you never, madam, ſaw ſuch a determined ſtarer —he appears to endeavour, and I dare ſay ſucceeds, to look down every female who is unfortunately near him—then his converſation—but I was educated in the convent of D——, and ſince I have left that ſacred haunt of all the virtues,

tues, I have moſt converſed with General Moncraſs, and Edward Harley, I am therefore ill qualified to ſpeak of Lord Morden: ſuch however as he is, a Miſs Julia Neville, one of the greateſt heireſſes in the kingdom, was by command of her relations his affianced bride; but to his great mortification, the young lady has actually eloped from her family, to avoid a marriage, to which ſhe was averſe.

I am more particular reſpecting this lord than any of Madame's viſitors, becauſe he is here quite en famille—we are indeed more (properly ſpeaking) of his family, than he of ours; as our dinners, and ſuppers, are ſerved at his expence, from a neighbouring hotel; from what I have ſaid, you will certainly believe I ſhall be very joyful, when I leave England—nor be ſurpriſed if I am at your feet, even before you have read this long, unintereſting detail, from your grateful.

AGNES.

LETTER

LETTER L.

Agnes in continuation.

MERCIFUL God! what will become of me—eight days are now elapſed ſince the return of the mail, and I have not received a line of conſolation, or aſſiſtance, from my more than parents, ſome unforeſeen accident, ſome fatal event, muſt have happened; never would you knowingly have abandoned your child in ſuch diſtreſs— whatever be the cauſe of your ſilence, I know you have not deſerted your Agnes.

Diſtracted at the ſuſpence in which I am kept, I thought of an expedient to raiſe money for my journey to France, which I flattered myſelf could not fail.

When Mr. Mitard brought the money he borrowed on my jewels, he begged I would not make myſelf uneaſy about hearing from my friends, as they were of great value, and I might command ſums to a large amount on them; I therefore applied to him to take up fifty more guineas, and declared my intention of going to France immediately.

I met, to my ſurpriſe, no oppoſition in this arrangement; Monſieur very alertly accepted my commiſſion, and went out to execute it; but no words can expreſs my grief and conſternation at his return.

The perſon, he ſaid, had been deceived in their value when he firſt ſaw them; and now,

inſtead

inſtead of advancing any further ſums, would be glad if I could pay what I had already borrowed, and take back the jewels.

Heavens! cried I, they coſt——

No matter, madam, interrupted Monſieur, what they coſt—buying and ſelling in this country are very different things; they were preſented to you, I preſume?

Indeed they were! anſwered I,

By a gentleman? ſaid Monſieur.

I wept——

Ah! Mademoiſelle, continued he, gentlemen will do theſe things; but with beauty, youth, and accompliſhments like yours, what is the defection of one lover? you are very charming, and there are many who are ſenſible of your attractions, of whoſe generoſity it will be prudent in you to avail yourſelf.

Judge my aſtoniſhment—my indignation—my diſguſt—at this (as it proved) preamble to the ſentiment of Mr. and Madame Mitard; but the miſery of my ſituation had not yet fully explained itſelf; I was ſo much intereſted, to believe the man's coarſe expreſſions, were as unmeaning as the ſervility he miſtook for politeneſs, that I did not ſuffer myſelf to ſeek for explanations, but coldly ſaid—I did not comprehend him, and was retiring—

Madame Mitard, however, had not the charity to ſuffer me to continue in ignorance——

Stop, Miſs, ſaid ſhe; you are in great haſte to leave people who have been your very good friends, and it is now neceſſary you ſhould be acquainted with what is expected from you—

I made a very precipitate retreat from the door, which I was opening, and ſeating myſelf by

by her, waited with no ſmall impatience the reſult of a converſation, not more extraordinary than unexpected; my extreme earneſtneſs diſconcerted Madame Mitard; the curious attention with which I looked on her face, actually embarraſſed her; it is not often ſhe bluſhes, or that her eyes are withdrawn, but it ſo happened now, that the mounting of the blood into her cheeks, notwithſtanding the quantity of rouge ſhe wears, was very viſible; and that the carpet for ſome moments received all the fire of her glances—but her native fortitude ſoon returned.

With reſpect to thoſe jewels, Mademoiſelle, ſaid ſhe, they are counterfeits—abſolutely counterfeits—Monſieur's credit is pledged for the money you borrowed on them—you are beſides conſiderably in our debt, yet you would leave us without the ſmalleſt regret; we are therefore bound in prudence to take care of ourſelves; we are indebted to our talents for ſubſiſtence, you are equally capable to provide for yourſelf by yours—we have certainly been your friends, and might have continued ſo longer, had you not dropt the maſk; but there is no reaſon why we ſhould be loſers for our charity.

Here had ſhe ſtopped her concluſions had not been unjuſt, although I am certain the jewels, whatever their value, were not counterfeits; General Moncraſs would not ſtoop to ſo paltry a deception, and I am further confirmed in this opinion by what followed.

I acknowledge, madam, I anſwered, my obligations for your profeſſions of kindneſs, but I muſt be pardoned ſaying I do not conceive they ought to prevent my wiſh to return to my friends:

friends: I am extremely concerned Monſieur ſhould involve himſelf in any difficulties for me, but I cannot eaſily believe thoſe bracelets were counterfeits, the perſon from whom I received them was a man of ſuch——

They both eagerly interrupted me—and proteſted they were mock pearl and roſe diamonds.

Well madam, ſaid I coldly, and what is the amount of other pecuniary debts you claim from me?

She had not made a regular account, but ſhould expect to be paid for bringing me from the country, as well as for my board from that time—we live, you ſee, Mademoiſelle in a tolerable genteel way, your bill will by no means be a light one.

I ſmiled a little contemptuouſly I believe, and Madamn Mitard's ſtock of philoſophy is rather ſmall—ſhe was exceedingly irritated.

Well, my little friend, continued ſhe, in a rage, we ſhall ſee whether the payment of our debt will ſit quite ſo eaſy on you, aſſure yourſelf you do not leave us until it is diſcharged.

Not leave you, madam, anſwered I—my ſtaying with you would by no means facilitate the payment of your debt—on the contrary, were I once to rejoin my friends, they would amply repay every civility ſhewn me.

Madame Mitard returned my contemptuous ſmile—and pray, Miſs, ſaid ſhe, who are thoſe friends of yours in whom we are ſo implicitly to confide?

I was ſilent.

You deal in myſteries, Miſs; but come, we are not diſpoſed to be mortally offended at the ingratitude you have ſhewn us.

We

We will forgive you, ſaid Monſieur, approaching me, provided you will take our advice in future.

Certainly, rejoined Madame, nothing can be more reaſonable than to know on whom and for what purpoſe we confer obligations; and have aſſurance Mademoiſelle will not leave our houſe without giving us every requiſite ſatisfaction.

I was extremely embarraſſed, I was very averſe to the giving them a promiſe I certainly did not mean to keep of ſtaying with them; neither did I think it prudent to irritate them by an avowal of my real ſentiments—while I was in this dilemma Lord Morden was announced; I was retiring with ſome haſte, but Madame, with an air partly authoritative, and partly ſuppliant, intreated I would not affront her beſt friend, and moſt powerful protector, by a conduct ſo diſobliging—I had not time to anſwer before his lordſhip entered.

Ah! ſaid he, as ſoon he ſaw me, my dear little ſhy friend, are *you* there? then turning to Madame Mitard with a freedom I had often before obſerved in his addreſs to her—this is very obliging, I had begun to deſpair of ever meeting your little ſkittiſh damſel again: why, child, continued he, familiarly taking my hand, you run away from me as if you were afraid of being eaten.

Louiſa (ſaid Madame Mitard) my Lord, is not uſed to company of your Lordſhip's rank, it is therefore natural ſhe ſhould be embarraſſed.

Oh! anſwered the rude man, putting his arms round me, if that be all, trouble yourſelf, Mitard, to order tea, and we will in the mean time become better friends.

Imagine, madam, my ſituation.

The

The woman actually left the room, and was immediately followed by her huſband.

Lord Morden again, for I had before diſengaged myſelf from him, attempted to throw his arms round my waiſt, I flew to the window which looked into the ſtreet, the ſaſh was up.

But this young nobleman (who as himſelf boaſts, is above paying any regard to decency) was not to be deterred by fear of *public* expoſure, from following the bent of his own inclinations.

You mean, Miſs, ſaid he, with a moſt undaunted countenance, to give me all poſſible trouble; but believe me, child, that is not wiſely done, you would make more of me by half, by truſting to my generoſity, as I think you might underſtand by the handſome earneſt I gave you.

I have not, I haughtily anſwered, the honor to underſtand your lordſhip.

No, replied he, gad I think twenty guineas, or pounds, is ſpeaking pretty plain to a little adventureſs like you——

If you mean, my lord, the bit of paper you gave Maſter Mitard——

The bit of paper, pretty one, why it was a bank note; what, in a voice wherein curioſity were blended; what have you done with it? you know the value of it—I hope you have not deſtroyed it—you have not deſtroyed a twenty pound note?

Be compoſed, my lord, with as much nonchalance as I could aſſume, Madame Mitard was ſo obliging as to undertake to reſtore it to your lordſhip; you are yourſelf, I hope, a competent judge

judge of its value, and will not in future, throw away ſuch good things to children and ideots.

Let me die, returned he, but I believe you are a wit—though your giving the note to Mitard is a ſtrong proof you have very little common ſenſe—but as there is nothing new in that, and as ſhe has moſt probably placed it in her own ſinking fund, you ſhall not be the loſer: let me know your terms, and I am ſo deſperately in love with you, that if they are within the compaſs of my fortune or credit, I will comply with them; you are not I ſee the ſimpleton I took you for—you have wit, and what is better, you have pride; it is a deviliſh ſtupid thing in a nobleman to take a miſtreſs who has not pride to ſupport her own dignity—you have profited by Mitard's inſtructions, and I like you the better; do her juſtice—no woman is more qualified to render you the ton, and the ton you will certainly be as ſoon as it is known you are mine; it is true, I have ſome thoughts of marrying, on which account you muſt, in common decency, keep a little in the back ground; but you will very ſoon have me all to yourſelf; I feel I ſhall be very fooliſh, only too fond of you, that is all; I ſhall give you a town houſe, and you ſhall reſide at one of my own villas in ſummer; as to my bride, ſhe has at preſent the impudence to pretend to diſlike me, for which reaſon, were there no other, and were it to coſt me half my fortune, I am determined to oblige her to marry me; Lady Mary Moncraſs.—

Good heavens! madam, how I ſtarted—the inſipid haranguer minded me not, he went on:

Lady Mary Moncraſs, an outrageouſly fooliſh woman, took it into her head to be jealous of her

her huſband, becauſe he liked a younger piece than herſelf, and in revenge to *him* reſolves to give *me* her daughter, merely becauſe young Moncraſs ſhall not have her; it is a poor little inſipid thing, but her fortune is immenſe, and you, my Louiſa, ſhall ſhare it with your Morden, nay, you ſhall be miſtreſs of it; be not therefore ſo coy, my little angel, attempting to take my hand, which I withdrew; ah! you cunning baggage, what I muſt ſign and ſeal firſt—well, prithee dear girl, then get it done, I am impatient to have you all my own.

Does Madame Mitard know of your lordſhip's honorable intention towards me? with as much compoſure as I could aſſume.

Not altogether, anſwered he, as little embarraſſed as you would conceive, ſhall I confeſs the truth?—Why then, Louiſa, to convince you how open I in future mean to deal with you, I muſt tell you, you rival Mitard, ſhe is handſome, lively, paints well, and is in ſhort tolerably amuſing; ſhe is not perhaps without her hopes, that ſhe ſhall turn the tables, and rival you in her turn; ſhe is miſtaken—you are juſt the girl to my taſte—there is, however, no abſolute neceſſity to make her acquainted with *every* thing, as ſhe would naturally be mortified, I ſhould give you more ſubſtantial proofs of my paſſion, than ſhe has been able to draw from me, you will therefore act wiſely in concealing from *her* my handſome deſigns in *your* favor.

Here, madam, here St. Clare—if ever this letter ſhould reach you, of which I have a thouſand fears; here is a ſpecimen of Engliſh morality; they talk in this country with wonderful gravity, of the liberties men of gallantry allow themſelves

themſelves in France, and tell a thouſand fabulous ſtories of the exceſſes in which, particularly after marriage, they indulge; but I think Lord Morden may diſpute the palm with any of our French libertines; indeed, if ingenuity be a merit, I can form no idea to myſelf of there being a poſſibility of excelling him in that; he certainly is neither aſhamed of his vices, or afraid of their conſequences; what he dares do, I really believe he will dare to juſtify; he is too haughty and too brave to fear offending his Maker.

But under the roof of Madame Mitard, and in the power of ſuch a man, do you not tremble for your Agnes? yet again my ſad heart preſages that you will not receive this, or any of my former letters; elſe, what can be the meaning of this cruel, this diſtreſſing ſilence? how many conjectures have I formed, and given up as ſoon as formed of the cauſe; if you were diſpleaſed with me, you would ſurely take the trouble to reprimand me, you would not deſert the wretched orphan, who has none to help her —no, it cannot be—I am ſure it cannot; but ſaid an author, you early taught me to diſtinguiſh.

"There is little difference betwixt fearing an "evil and feeling it; except that the evil "one feels has bounds, whereas one's appre-"henſions has none, for we can ſuffer no more "than what actually *has*, but we fear all that "poſſibly *can* happy."

And fear it too often, madam, againſt reaſon and probability; it has unhappily in my fate, followed the danger, inſtead of preceding it; my poor heart ſhrinks under the conſequences of

the ſtep I have taken; and now that I know the real evil to which I am expoſed, the imaginary ones, from which I fled, appear a mere ſhadow.

Yet, madam, let me once more caſt myſelf at your feet, let me raiſe my flowing eyes to him, whoſe throne is the fountain of mercy and forgiveneſs; let me implore *his* protection, and hope for *yours*; ſhould my letters reach you, no longer withhold your favor, yet it may be too late, again muſt the wretched Agnes become a wanderer, again caſt herſelf on that Providence, that will uphold the virtuous, and again ſeek ſome happy chance of reaching the ſerene houſe of religious chaſtity.

I have learnt, fatally learnt, ſince I have been with the Mitards, to condemn the folly that threw me from the protective roof of a man of honor:—I feel with ſelf reproach, the raſh ingratitude I was guilty of, in leaving General Moncraſs, and my heart condemns me from a latent motive, hidden almoſt from myſelf, which my weakneſs had miſnamed prudence—ah! madam, I have promiſed to lay my whole heart open to you, never more will I conceal a thought from the moſt indulgent of women; it was Harley's ſuſpicion of my honor, which ſtabbed me to the heart; it was *him* I thought to wound by my flight; in the ſame moment he is convinced of my innocence, he ſhall alſo know, ſaid I, that I am loſt to him for ever; and while I flattered myſelf I only ſought to clear my fame, wounded—alas! by whom? by the man to whoſe protection, the parting St. Clare and virtuous St. Lawrence committed the object in whom their fondeſt love was centered.

Ingrate!

Ingrate! that I am, how could I forget the paternal tears he ſhed over me, when almoſt convulſed with agony he parted with St. Clare? why do I heſitate? why do I not return to his protection? why not implore his pardon, and confeſs the weakneſs of my heart?

But what would Harley ſay? would he?—O forgive me, madam, what indeed is Harley to me; would to God I was with you, that I might vent the ſorrows of my heart at your feet!

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I had preſence of mind, notwithſtanding my indignation and terror, to preſerve an unruffled countenance during the whole of the converſation I have related; Lord Morden has, I imagine, more vanity than even vice in his compoſition—he fancied his attractions ought to charm me, and concluded that they did ſo.

If pique, thought I, in that moment, urges this nobleman to take a wife, for whom he has himſelf no predilection, and whoſe affections are pre-engaged, avowedly to puniſh her diſlike to him, how far may it urge him to revenge himſelf on me, for a ſimilar offence? and if Madame Mitard had the meanneſs to convert the note I entruſted her to return, to her own uſe, will not a temptation of the ſame kind carry her ſtill greater lengths? theſe were the concluſions of a moment, and you will own they were not ill founded.

I requeſted a few hours to conſider Lord Morden's propoſals, and ſuffered him to believe that I ſhould give directions about drawing the ſettlements he offered; and in order to favor this

ſcheme he inſiſted on the Mitards going in his party to Vauxhall.

Whether they ſuſpected my deſign to leave them, or whether it was Monſieur's little goût for his wife's company, which he always avoided, when he could do it decently, I cannot tell; but when the tea was brought up he followed the ſervant; I was much diſconcerted when I ſaw him, as I am determined on leaving their houſe this evening; I have employed the time ſince Lord Morden and Mrs. Mitard have been gone, in packing up my few wearables, and writing to you—and am now at the ſecretary purſuing the ſame employment, while he is ſauntering about the room and amuſing himſelf with his flute; all my hopes are, that ſome of the gay Signoras, who lodge in this ſtreet, will paſs by, and tempt him (for he is a man of prodigious gallantry) to walk out; in the mean time, I will juſt give you a ſketch of my deſign; you will ſay I am a ſchemer, how little did I once foreſee the neceſſity I ſhould be under to adopt that character.

M. Mitard's Mantua-maker is a French woman, who takes many journies in the year to Paris to learn the faſhions, and generally imports a great quantity of goods, which are prohibited here; a friend of Monſieur's had ſent over ſome fine lace for ruffles, which were ſeized by the revenue officers; Mrs. du Bois who was ſuppoſed to be converſant in ſuch matters, was conſulted on the poſſibility of regaining the lace, and in the courſe of converſation, acquainted them with the method ſhe took to convey her goods from France.

A Mr. Arnold, who reſides a little beyond a place called Greenwich,—where that is, heaven knows!

knows! but I muſt find it; keeps a couple of ſailing boats, large enough to accommodate two or three paſſengers; and ſuch ſwift ſailers, that ſuperadded to his own extreme ſobriety and caution, conſtantly eluded the vigilance of the revenue officers; this man, ſhe ſaid, who made it a point never to trade for himſelf, had accumulated a decent fortune by the integrity with which he tranſacted contraband buſineſs for other people, and, continued du Bois, I always go and return with him, and have never loſt a thread.

This information made a deep impreſſion on me, and I took care to enter every particular in my tablets; du Bois is now at Paris, and Mitard is too volatile to remember this circumſtance, to Greenwich therefore I am reſolved to go; I will explain my ſituation to the man, he is the father of a family of children, and however eaſy his circumſtances, a man who continually riſks his life to encreaſe his ſtore, will not refuſe a handſome preſent on ſuch a ſimple occaſion, as carrying a poor worthleſs young creature back to her dear country: I ſhall be very liberal in my promiſes, and hire him to take me to Boulogne, where the good father Dominick will, I am ſure, enable me to perform all my engagements—if I am ſo happy as ever to ſee my honored lady Abbeſs, and beloved St. Clare, they will reimburſe the venerable prieſt; if not, if that only happineſs after which my heart pants, is denied me, I ſhall at leaſt lay my bones in ſome of the cloyſters of our holy church.

Ah! madam, I tremble, my eagerneſs will betray me—Monſieur is actually going out—his ſervant

ſervant is bruſhing his chapeau—two Italians wait in the ſtreet, it is a warm evening, they talk of airing on the water.

He is gone—he is out of ſight—adieu, adieu, moſt beloved, moſt honored of friends, oh! pray for your

AGNES.

END of the FIRST VOLUME.